

CARRYING THE CROSS

**The Autobiography of
Rt. Rev. Dr. Matthew Oluremi Owadayo**



VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

CARRYING THE CROSS

**The Autobiography of
Bishop Matthew Oluremi
Owadayo**

CARRYING THE CROSS

**The Autobiography of
Bishop Matthew Oluremi Owadayo**



Safari Books Ltd
Ibadan

Published by
Safari Books Ltd
Ile Ori Detu
1, Shell Close
Onireke
Ibadan.
Email: *safarinigeria@gmail.com*

© Bishop Matthew Oluremi Owadayo

Publisher: Chief Joop Berkhout, OON
Deputy Publisher: George Berkhout

First Published 2014

All rights reserved. This book is copyright and so no part of it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electrical, mechanical, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

ISBN: 978-978-8431-43-5

Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Foreword I</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Foreword II</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xvii</i>
Chapter 1: Early Childhood	1
Chapter 2: Getting Started: My Primary Education	13
Chapter 3: My Secondary Education	27
Chapter 4: Apprenticeship Pays	65
Chapter 5: A Grouse Against My Ministerial Ambition	73
Chapter 6: Launched into Full-Time Parish Ministry	93
Chapter 7: Undergraduate Days at the University of Ibadan	107
Chapter 8: Training Future Church Leaders	115
Chapter 9: Back for Higher Degree	123

<i>Chapter 10: Romance with the Academia</i>	131
<i>Chapter 11: Preferred Cathedral Provost</i>	147
<i>Chapter 12: From Provost to Dean</i>	171
<i>Chapter 13: Episcopal Election</i>	193
<i>Chapter 14: My Ministry, Our Ministry</i>	201
<i>Chapter 15: Synods and their Themes</i>	221
<i>Chapter 16: Various Prongs of Evangelism</i>	235
<i>Chapter 17: Diocesan Silver Jubilee</i>	
Celebration	283
<i>Chapter 18: Medical Welfare for the Clergy</i>	301
<i>Chapter 19: Glorious Exit</i>	313
<i>Chapter 20: The Family God has Given Me</i>	319
<i>Chapter 21: Honours Roll</i>	325
<i>Index</i>	327

Dedication

This book is dedicated to God for granting me Abraham Ogundana and Sarah Asake as caring parents; Zachariah Ademola and Elisha Olabode as dear brothers; and Eunice Olufunmilayo, my loving, dependable and supportive wife and mother of our glorious children.

They are all the architects of my success story.

Acknowledgements

I owe God Almighty the deepest gratitude for enabling me to write my autobiography. In His inscrutable wisdom, He graced me with the most caring mother and most loving brother, who both denied themselves to give me education by heeding the inspiring counsel of Prince (later, Oba Olufira) Joseph A. Adesunloye.

I am thankful to God for people who crossed my way and impacted my life and ministry by their assistance, direction, inspiration, joy and encouragement. These God-led people included Moshood Alebiosu, a 1955 final year muslim student who helped me with words of encouragement when I faced financial difficulties in Victory College, Ikare; Chief and Mrs. A. I. Dare, who played the role of father and mother to two of our children, Femi and Ope, when my wife and I went on further studies at the same time; Bishop G.I.O. Olajide who discouraged me from withdrawing from Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, in 1963 when I had health challenges; Provost (later Archbishop) T.O. Olufosoye, who kindly took me to Adeoyo State Hospital, Yemetu, Ibadan, to find solution to my health problem; Rev. Prof. (later Prelate, Methodist Church, Nigeria) E. Bolaji Idowu and Ven. Dr. (later Bishop) and Mrs J. O. Arulefela, who insisted on my going to do higher degree; Ven. Prof. J.O. Awolalu for his tireless concern for my research success; Hon. Justice and Mrs. Owen Fiebai for their golden advice in Jos; Archbishop J.A. Adetiloye gave me the rare opportunity of heading the Seminary (Alma Mater) and

appointed me Chairman Theological and Doctrinal Committee for Church of Nigeria; Archbishop P.J. Akinola (my Parishioner No.1) who retained me as chairman of the same committee and in addition appointed me to serve (as the Representative for the Church of Nigeria) on the Archbishop of Canterbury's Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) that produced a Report titled: 'Communion, Conflict and Hope.' I also remember Hon. Justice B.O. Ogunade, my adviser when I was appointed Chairman, Commission of Enquiry into the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) 2007-2008 crisis.

I am grateful to the present Primate, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, MA, FSS, MSS, LLD, a very humble, unassuming, disciplined and detribalized church leader who debunked the general theory that 'retirement means too old, leave it to the younger ones, be in seclusion.' For Archbishop Okoh, there is no retirement in the service of the King of kings! He invited Bishop E.B. Gbonigi and myself to give lectures at the 2012 DIVCCON. The Primate also graciously appointed me chairman of the Anglican-African Commission in 2011. He again invited me as a resource person to Jan. 2014 Episcopat Retreat.

Also with grateful thanks to Toyin and Bimbo, who did the typing in London in the Summer holiday of 2011.

And we register with the greatest sense of appreciation our acknowledgement of the immense contributions by all members of Egba Diocese for bringing our ministry to a glorious climax.

Foreword 1

This book is a compendium of the grace of God at work in the life of an ordinary citizen, but destined child of God, from the most humble of beginnings. From his birth at his hometown, Ifira-Akoko, in 1939, into the family of Abraham and Sarah (replay of the biblical patriarch and matriarch) and the events surrounding his birth and early years, it is obvious that God had great plans for him, and that Satan knew it as well. Thanks to his mother who bore the burden of his education and prayed earnestly for him; also to his brother who shared substantially in the burden. Being a very intelligent chap, especially in Arithmetic, he gained admission by the will of God into Victory College, Ikare (mission founded) against his wish of going to Kings College, Lagos (secular).

His decision to proceed to training as pastor after his College education was in contrast to the times because white collar jobs were readily available for all educated persons and more so, in those days, families looked up anxiously to such lease of life. Rtrd Bishop Owadayo is indeed a man after God's heart; he was hardworking and self-disciplined; got high grades at school but answered God's call rather than go for the things of the world. Little wonder God lifted him up to the apex of the Church ministry. During his training, God providentially mentored him through some human instrument; and after his ordination, was sent back to Victory College, Ikare as Chaplain.

God used him in several capacities in the parish ministry while he continued with vigorous academic pursuit to the Ph.D level, though with much struggles. He was at a time appointed Men's warden of Archbishop Vining Training Centre, Akure; preferred Cathedral Provost, and later Dean, Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan. In December 1994, he was elected Bishop of the Diocese of Egba. Through all his journeys in the ministry, God taught him not to live by sight but by faith. Before his retirement in 2009, he had made tremendous positive impart on the Church, especially in the area of evangelism, medical care, etc., and in the lives of the ministers; all with the unalloyed support of his wife, Eunice, and others too numerous to mention.

The testimonies of the life of Rtrd Bishop Owadayo, as contained in this book, are evidences of what God can do with a man when he surrenders to His will obediently; accepting whatever He has permitted. It is also proof that it takes discipline and hardwork on the part of man to make God's plan to materialize. This book is, therefore, going to be a great encouragement to all those struggling with the will God, especially those in or being called into the holy vocation. The life of Bishop Owadayo is a proof that God cares for His own and that when He calls, He equips.

As we recommend this work to all and sundry, it is our prayer that God will through it bless and revive the hope of those, especially of His messengers, who are at the brink of giving up because of hard times or difficulties. God is ever

faithful, neither failing, changing nor shifting like shadow; hence, He can be trusted with our lives and even the unknown. The Psalmist said:

“Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread.”

The Most Rev’d Nicholas D. Okoh,
Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria.

Foreword 2

My first contact with Dr. Matthew Owadayo was in 1978. He was at that time, a senior Lecturer in Theology at the University of Jos. At the invitation of the bishop of Northern Nigeria, the Rt. Revd Titus Ogbonyonmi, Dr. Owadayo preached at my priesthood ordination and made a permanent impression on my tender heart as a genuine pastor, teacher and erudite scholar. By his personal conduct and visible humility, Dr Owadayo earned my respect, a respect that has been sustained to this day.

In 1989, I became the bishop of the virgin land called Abuja. I had the onerous task of building the diocese from ground zero; as there was practically nothing on ground to start with. I had to travel extensively around the country, looking for whatever help I could get. It was in the course of one such travels that I came to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan; only to discover that in 1990, Dr. Owadayo had been appointed the Dean! It was a huge happy reunion. Our chemistry bonded, joyfully.

In the course of our conversation, he made a statement that again made a profound impression on me and which also enabled me to know more of his ecclesiological convictions. He said, "Theological Seminary exists to serve the Church. If it should fail to do so, then, it loses the right to exist." Since then, I chose to follow his work and progress more closely.

Unknown to him, I prayed and discussed my experience of him with our superiors, in the hope that someday, such a

man of God, with great passion for the Church, intelligent, resourceful and yet very humble as Dr. Owadayo would, someday, be the bishop of my home diocese of Egba. And so it was in 1995 that, by the special grace of the LORD our God, and against all intrigues and encumbrances, he actually became the third diocesan bishop of Egba diocese. I was so fond of him that I called him 'my bishop'; and he in turn never wasted a moment anywhere we found ourselves in referring to me as his 'parishioner number one.'

As the bishop of Egba diocese, Dr. Owadayo laboured hard and well. As an active participant in the Church of Nigeria economic and financial development workshops and seminars, he resolved to make his diocese economically buoyant. He did not only mobilise the diocese to build a new and befitting bishop's house in record time, he established a number of viable economic ventures to lay a solid foundation for the economic well-being of his diocese.

For all his accomplishments in the service of the LORD and his Church, to God be the GLORY.

Dr. Peter J. Akinola, CON

November 23, 2013

Preface

“The story of our life cannot be understood till we have heard the whole of it. But the final pages, no one knows how God will write them.”

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments but what is woven into the lives of others.”

Following our retirement thanksgiving service at Ifira-Akoko on 23rd October 2009, one of our grandchildren at breakfast the following morning asked, “Grandpa, how did you leave this village to become Bishop of Egba Diocese?”

I laughed and answered, “You will read the story one day.” To write a whole history of my life’s journey is to successfully convey to my children and grand children and my reader that it is a combination of both the physical and the spiritual. The physical movement which does not always take the straight line of geographical loci of progress took me out of my dear village in 1954, not knowing where it was leading to. It gave me the advantage of travelling around the world. It also took me away from village childhood friends and United Primary School mates, some of whom I may never meet again.

From Victory College, Ikare, in 1959, the spiritual fused with the physical, acquiring a new impetus to embark on a new journey of faith, by following the footmarks of an Unseen

Leader. With the passionate conviction that not only is there a God Who revealed Himself to me unmistakably, through Jesus Christ, but He is the God Who is infinitely knowing and amazingly revealing, dependable and trustworthy. Thus began a new chapter of my adventurous life.

These years of spiritual and intellectual journey have been hard, rough, full of risks, twists and turns, but at times exciting and interesting. The journey took me and my wife to places we never heard of and we met people of different nationalities.

The nature of our work brought us into contact with cross-roads of people and places which have woven our journey experiences with lessons learnt on the way. Our ministry which spanned five decades took us to places of historical importance like Ondo, the first port of call and the station of Rev. (later Bishop) S.C. Philips, the Apostle of Christianity to the Ondo kingdom, where we worked with Bishop I.O.S. Okusanya, the Very Rev. (later first Archbishop of Church of Nigeria) T.O. Olufoye, the Very Rev. (later Bishop) I.B.O. Akintemi; Ikare-Akoko the station of Hon. Venerable L.A. Lennon, the Apostle of Christianity to Akokoland.

A very exciting and challenging last phase of our journey took us to Abeokuta, the cradle of Christianity and first station of Rev. (later the first black Bishop) Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the doyen of the first generation of missionaries to Nigeria. Various phases of our pilgrimage exposed us to the vicissitudes of perplexing tasks and prosperity of astounding achievements.

In the course of my fifty years in Church ministry, I was opportuned to work, either directly or closely with ten bishops and four primates (outstanding Church fathers including the current one) of the Church of Nigeria, from whom I have acquired much experience. The result of my experience is bound to be a catalogue of dates, events and names. Some of the Themes with my Charges delivered at various Synods in

various churches and years are valuable as works of reference. They are indispensable to students of history, to sons and daughters of those places. The present and future church workers with members will derive spiritual, moral and intellectual inspiration thereby.

This documented history of a spiritual journey is designed to put before the reader, information about areas where God used us to bring value to His work and re-live the memories of legendary figures—male and female, clergy and laity. It is intended to show enthusiasm, admiration and appreciation for some of the living heroes and heroines of faith. They pep up inspiration to face life gallantly in spite of odds.

God gave us grace to respond to a call to the wider ministry of shepherding His flocks in Egba Diocese, with love, zest and enthusiasm. Our ministry witnessed a spiritual development with economic transformation that brought our spiritual journey to an appreciable close.

No one is a self-made man. We all find someone to assist, advise, show the way or even lift us up to reach the top or attain our goal – be he a father, mother, relation, teacher or stranger. God did not come down to do it, He does not and will not work without us. In that spirit, we are grateful to all who worked with us to do God's work. The grace of God be with them. Amen.

1

Early Childhood

I was born in Ifira-Akoko, the ancestral home of my grandparents, in 1939. My ancestors, for many centuries, have been living in this community which was a small village; predominantly a rural agricultural community, but today, has become a fast-growing town. There is no written record of where its inhabitants came from, when and how they got to where they are and what brought them to the location. This lack of written history is not peculiar to Ifira, as there are many other surrounding towns and villages that suffer same fate.

Akokoland

Every town and village in Akokoland is hyphenated to Akoko to show their common historical origin, their dialectical diversities notwithstanding. The coexistence of these Akoko towns and villages predates the nineteenth century. They had a common fate of untold suffering in the hands of tribal powers and warlords in their struggle for economic supremacy. When the country was within the throes of slavery and slave trade, the entire lands of Akoko, Ekiti, Owo, Kabba, Afemai, Ijumu, Yagba, Edo, etc., were ready grounds for raiding and were thoroughly ravaged.

In the Book, *'AKOKOLAND, History and Distinguished People'*, (1997) written by Foluso Aminu and Wole Kolawole, Akoko was presented to have derived its name or meaning from two possible sources by interpretation. One was due to their 'inseparable-togetherness', 'tight-closeness', or 'oneness,' which characterised the spirit of love, or fellowship between them, despite their language differences. The second meaning was from literal translation for AKOKO as: *'Akoko-tun-ko'*, that is, 'ceaseless carrying off... in large number.'

Akoko towns and villages, among other places mentioned earlier, were subjected to vilest experiences when warlord-oppressors like Ayorinde of Ibadan, Ogedengbe of Ilesa, Ajaka (Ajakaiye) and various Etsus – Usman Zaki, Massaba, Umuaru Najigi and Maliki of Nupe, overran and endlessly devastated them between 1820 and 1897. My mother who died in 1993 at the age of over a hundred years, narrated how Ogedengbe and the 'Tappas' (Nupes) came several times to raid Ifira, among other places, in her childhood and how her parents hid her with other children on top of the roof.

In my opinion, I presume that the second suggestion by Aminu and Kolawole for calling that area 'Akoko' is reasonable. Although it is funny enough, it is also surprising that despite that Akoko was constantly devastated by slave-raiders from the west and north prongs, they were inexhaustible in population, energy and unity!

In contemporary times, Akoko towns and villages are solidly united, determined and proud of their cultural heritage. Having suffered economic exploitation in the past and lost so much in human resources to the nefarious trade in human commodity, they are very sensitive and suspicious of oppressive external incursions. They are focused on economic, political and academic emancipation, cherishing virtues of honesty, hardwork, courage, respect and humility.

Ifira, my hometown, shares neighbourhood with Ipesi, which lies on the east, Afo on the west, Shosan and Ishua on the north and Idoani and Idogun on the southern part. Geographically, these towns are dotted along the eastern boundary of Ondo State and the old Bendel State; now Edo State.

A strong narrative adduces common ancestral place of origin to the above named towns and those in Akokoland, usually traceable to Oduduwa in Ile Ife. Apart from their geographical closeness, nearly all of them share very strong dialectal, cultural and traditional similarities which cover stories, events and other practices. Relatively, there are distant places from Ifira, like Imeri, Oba-Akoko, and Oka-Akoko that also have striking dialectal similarities. These claims identify the history of Ifira with the rest of Yorubaland.

Ifira was formed by existing separate sub-ethnic groups called *Adugbo*, that is, 'quarters.' They are, Ipiran, Iremu, Ise and Efon quarters, constituting Odo-Ifira, while others are Ishowo, Odoro and Oke-Ifira. These quarters form Ifira township.

When I was a kid, Ifira and the neighbouring towns were supposed to be, or had the prospect of being the Ire-Kari or Ile-labo Local Government Council, with Ifira as headquarters because of its centrality. In the early 1950s however, the politics of the old Western Region of Nigeria witnessed dramatic changes which affected the proposal. During the regime of the former Governor of Ondo-State, Chief Ade Adefarati, Ifira and her neighbouring towns were declared Ire-kari-Ile-labo Local Government Council in 2003, with Ifira as the headquarters. The news was carried by national daily newspapers, however, this was not effected before the expiration of that regime. This was part of the common instabilities of political panorama in Nigeria, full of fun and surprises. It also shows how much Ifira has witnessed the social and political vicissitudes of life!

Today, while writing this memoir, Ifira-Akoko is located within Akoko South-East Local Government Council, with Ishua as headquarters. The other oral version of the history of Ifira, which was passed down to us, states that these ethnic groups that form Ifira came from different distant places at different times to settle in the place now known as Ifira. With time, these ethnic groups who probably migrated to Ifira during the internecine wars before, during or after the 18th Century demarcation of Africa, became gradually forged together, more for security reasons and self-preservation, than for social interaction or self-interest. The existing land space overgrown with weeds, resulting from isolated separate group-settlements, has become a feature of the past. Some of the cultural practices of the existing groups have gradually disappeared, giving room for modernisation due to migration and integration.

My Family

My mother was born in Okekede in Ipiran, one of the quarters in Ifira. Her father's name was 'Elegba', whose traditional chieftaincy title was 'Owaseye.' Chief Elegba Owaseye had only one wife whose name was Uzafolakemi (Ijafolakemi). Legend had it that the couple were always seen together; they went to farm and attended social functions together. They had only one pretty daughter whom they loved dearly and named Asake (a beloved one). True to her name, she was said to be very beautiful and admired by all in the community.

Asake's beauty was greatly admired by the then (Oba) traditional ruler of Ifira, Oba Olugbedan 1, who also sent secret agents to woo her. She however refused to marry the king because she did not have the consent of her parents who were not willing to release her, being their only child. When the Oba became impatient, he sent royal emissaries with objects of traditional royal authority to seduce her whenever and wherever

she was found. Through such strategies, he could cleverly pin a signet of royalty on her hair which once done, would make her his consort for life!

Even though Chief and Mrs Elegba Owaseye refused bluntly to give their only daughter to Oba Olugbedan, the latter surreptitiously succeeded in getting Asake kidnapped and hidden in the palace! While there, she did not give the Oba any attention. She cried day and night. A friend of Asake's mother, Oniropa, reported Asake's predicament to her parents who hurriedly rushed to Oba's palace to plead for her immediate release. The Oba was ready to release her, only on the condition that the mother would pay a fine of a calabash-full of kolanuts, while the father would weed the palace premises for her ransom. Of course they willingly carried out the condition. The only way to escape the hidden wrath of the ruler was for the father to run away from the village secretly with his daughter. This he did at night as he moved to Idogun.

There at Idogun, Asake later happily got married to a young well-to-do man, Chief Ado Ariwajoye, who was also attracted to Asake. Her husband was a prominent farmer and hunter in the town. She had three children for him: Felicia Orebe (Rebecca), Samuel Adeseluka Omotoyi and Oladunni Olamide.

Even though the Elegbas felt relieved that 'the apple of their eye' was out of reach of the Oba's chase, their relief and joy was short-lived when Asake lost her dear husband, Chief Ado Ariwajoye, in a war with the warlord, Ogedengbe! The premature death of her husband sorrowfully forced her back to Ifira to live permanently with her parents. Her two young daughters also came with her to Ifira, while she left Samuel Omotoyi Adeseluka, the only son, in Idogun, as the family heir to Ado Ariwajoye.

Back at Ifira, Asake was not willing to remarry, even though her parents advised her to do so when many suitors were showing their interests to marry her. They only gave a

condition that the would-be husband allow her to live with them. They would not like to part with her again.

Mr. Ogundana Jegede was one of those who expressed desire and readiness to marry her. He was the son of Mr. Ogunmolaju, whose mother came from Okefira. 'Ogun' (the 'Iron-god') was the family deity, after whom children in the family were customarily named. When Ogundana Jegede became converted to Christianity, he changed his name to Abraham Jegede. When his uncle, whose chieftaincy title was 'Owadayo' died, Amos, my father's nephew, who was the rightful man to inherit the title, declined on the excuse that the eldest man in the family should inherit the title. My father, Mr Ogundana Jegede Ogunmolaju, being the oldest in the family, inherited the chieftaincy title 'Owadayo', and thus became Chief Abraham Jegede Owadayo. He apparently preferred to be addressed as 'Chief Abraham Jegede Owadayo,' the last name being adopted by all successively in the family.

Abraham Jegede Owadayo readily consented to allow his intended suitor, Asake, to stay with her parents because his house was not far from theirs and also because he already had three wives with many children, all living together with him in his house. Chief and Mrs Elegba Owaseye considered him suitable and thus gave their blessing. At that time, the more wives a man had, the wealthier he was presumed to be, and the more enhanced was his social status thereby in the rural agricultural community. Moreover, by adding a new wife, Mr. Abraham Ogundana Owadayo became more respected in the community. He was accorded the honour of a high chief in the caucus of chiefs.

Owadayo and Asake were blessed with three children – Zacchariah Ademola, Elisha Olabode and Comfort Omolemi. Legend had it that they lost some babies as a

result of infant mortality common in their days. Mama Asake got converted and was christened Sarah which made a pleasant coincidence. So, Papa Abraham and Mama Sarah attended St Peter's Church, Ifira. I do not know if they knew much about the biblical Abraham and Sarah before their baptism.

Meanwhile, my mother's first two daughters; Felicia Orebe and Oladunni had got married to David Ojomo Owabumola and Rufus Owamara respectively. Orebe had three children: Shem Ayo, Victoria Olayemi and Christopher Kora, while Oladunni had only one child, Ruth Adunni, who later had over six children; Tale Obanigba, a civil servant in Akure, being the eldest.

My Birth

The circumstances surrounding my birth in 1939, as I was later told by my mother, proved to her that God apparently had an obscure purpose for my life, a mystery that God gradually began to unravel. For four long days, my mother passed through hard labour of childbirth! She became weak, anaemic and almost lifeless! In a geographically remote village of Ifira, there were neither dispensaries, clinics nor maternity homes. It was therefore anachronistic, and of course, a mirage, to talk of ante-natal care. If a maternal death occurred as a result of exhaustion after prolonged labour, it was generally attributed to witchcraft. A victim was customarily carried to a far distance and deposited in river Ose, between Ipesi and Imeri or between Ishua and Ikiran.

My safe birth therefore brought physical, mental and emotional relief and joy into the family circle, and also allayed the fear of my mother's death, or even the imminent loss of both mother and child. For a mother who already had six children to have laboured for four agonising days for the seventh childbirth and survived, was an unforgettable ordeal of her life! The tidings

conveyed by my birth were so extraordinary that at first, the genuineness of safe delivery was doubted as many thought either the mother would have a stillbirth or both of them would die. Many women have had this sort of experience and died in the process. Some women who had up to nine children were distinguished and celebrated in the worst days of lack of birth control. Poor mothers! Many of them were ignorant of the risk of giving birth to children without ante and post-natal care. I knew a woman in my village who lost all her nine children after each delivery.

For many years, my mother never stopped recollecting the ordeal she passed through before my birth. Three months preceding my birth, my mother lost her mother, Uzafolakemi, who would have given her only daughter every watchful care she needed. The fact that my mother survived this trying time made my birth to be welcomed with great enthusiasm in the family. I was named 'Oluremilekun' (God comforts me). The meaning of my name shows a significant departure from the old ways of giving names to reflect loyalty to family deity. My name reflects that my parents ascribed the miracle of my birth to God, rather than to a deity. It could be observed that none of my siblings was named after Ogun, the extended family deity.

There is much significance attached to child-naming in my town as well as in every part of Yorubaland. The name given to a child often reflects the climate of experience prevailing in the family at the time of birth. Thus, the Yoruba people say, '*Ile la nwo k'a to s'omo loruko*,' which literally means that the prevailing domestic circumstances dictate what name(s) to give to a child, born at any particular time.

My mother being the fourth and youngest wife, and probably most prospective and strongest to do farmwork, received my father's strong affection. She subsequently and successively had four children for him – Zachariah Ademola,

Elisha Olabode, Comfort Omolemi and the last and youngest of the entire extended family was myself, Matthew Oluremilekun. All of us were born to Mr. (later Chief) Abraham Owadayo. Four of us, together with our mother, lived with our grandparents.

Though my father's house was a bit far from where we lived, he was however, very close to us. His sentimental attachment to this 'second home' began to increase by the day. He was particularly fond of me, his youngest son. Following the loss of my maternal grandfather and grandmother, my father became more sensitive and responsive to our family needs, requests, aspirations, and of course, concerns.

In our fairly large family setting, every mother cares for her children's needs, such as feeding, clothing and in some cases, education. When the family head is ageing and unable to fend for the family, they automatically take over the responsibility of their respective part of the whole complex family.

As a child born to my father in his old age, he had special affection for me and often loved to see me around him. I was always there sitting by his side, ready to run some errands like fetching his tobacco pipe, walking stick, big hand-leather fan, etc. With his leather-fan, I used to fan him while relaxing on his armchair under the coconut tree at the backyard. I enjoyed helping baba (papa) to crack and suck to the marrow, chicken bones too hard for the aged. And my mother, being the youngest of his four wives, was already used to this 'school of self-help.' I never knew the names of my father's three other wives. I knew them by their children's names, such as Iya-'Tosho, Iya-Jimoh and Iya-Ikumenikan. In Yorubaland, it was an act of disrespect to call an elder by name. He or she is either 'brother so-so or sister so-so' even when you are not related.

Omotosho (Tosho) was the eldest son of my father, and of course the heir to my father. There were two daughters by the other two wives who were older than Tosho. Tosho's mother was

from Ipesi. My other half-brothers and half-sisters included Mama-Janet, married to an Imeri man with children. Her eldest daughter, Juliet was married to Mr Adeyanju of Imeri. Others were Emmanuel Ikumenikan, late father of Franklin Olaniran Owadayo, a businessman at Ikare-Akoko, Herbert Jimoh Owadayo, Marian Tehinmosan, mother of Venerable Revd. Tunde Tehinmosan of Ijesha-North Anglican Diocese.

Idogun: Place of Refuge

The first time I passed a night in my father's house was when I was terribly ill. My mother took me there because she was made to believe that there, I would be well. It was a strange experience, not only for me but also for my mother who had never passed a night under my father's roof.

After spending some few days in my father's house, there was no improvement. My health was deteriorating. I was therefore rushed to Idogun. The mystery surrounding my sickness started with very severe stomach pain after I ate some red plantain offered me by an old woman in my dream. I knew the woman to be our next-door-neighbour, who was dyeing wool and clothes side by side with my mother. In a short time, I had lost much weight due to my excessive stooling. All available native medicines applied proved abortive. My father and mother were not only disturbed, but nearly lost hope. At a time when there were no modern clinics, dispensaries or hospital services, the next alternative was to resign to fate!

When the situation became convincingly hopeless, my mother decided to take me to Idogun as the last resort. My father too, hesitatingly had to see me and my mother off with an exchange of sad sighs of goodbye. Accompanied by two relatives, my mother put me on her back and embarked on an uncertain journey to Idogun.

The story of the miracle that happened on the way to Idogun was best narrated by my mother, even though she did

not quite understand how it happened. In her own words, she knew that I was not breathing when she carried me on her back that fateful morning but she refused to tell anyone that I was already dead. For the rest of her life, my mother never stopped wondering how I survived the inexplicable illness that had already claimed my life before she decided to take me to Idogun. She remembered I was resuscitated when she got to the top of a high hill called 'Ota-rodan' (hill of happy celebration) which was about ten kilometres from Ifira.

She narrated how she backed me lifeless and I spoke for the first time, asking her to let me down and walk by myself on top of the hill! What an inexplicable healing grace of God!! I knew my mother to be very prayerful and that as a new convert, she would be praying quietly while walking on the way along the narrow winding footpath.

At Idogun, kind-hearted people supported my mother to take care of me. Her son, Samuel Adeseluka Omotoyi Ariwajoye (my big half-brother), had become really big and well-to-do. Now married to three wives, he had enough hands to handle his large farmwork and increase farm outputs to feed his family. Through God's inscrutable ways, I became well, strong enough too to help my brother do some farmwork. As soon as I began to speak Idogun dialect, I quickly made friends.

When my mother saw that I was well, she gladly left me to the care of my big half-brother and Marian, one of his wives, for some years. Marian was a very staunch member of the Apostolic Church who provided me, not only with physical care, but also spiritual nourishment. She took me to Sunday church services and night vigils. Marian was the only practising, and church-going christian in the family, unlike my half-brother, Samuel Omotoyi, and his other two wives. In addition, she was a deeply religious, God-fearing and prayerful woman. My stay in Idogun with the Ariwajoyes after my mother had left (after

my recovery) was for about three to four years. During this short period, I helped my brother in the farm and made a lot of friends.

Getting Started: My Primary Education

At Ifira, the need to enrol me in school was prompted by the Catechist's emphasis on the importance of education. He instructed members of the church to send their children to school and this really challenged my mother. Without wasting time, she sent my brother to come for me at Idogun. Anxiously, my return to Ifira was effected.

One morning, sometime after I settled at Ifira, my parents took me to the mission house to find out if I was old enough to start schooling. The Headmaster/Catechist, Mr. J. K. Olukoju, a native of Akunu-Akoko, received us warmly. He was the Catechist pastoring St. Peter's Church, Ifira, as well as the headmaster managing the school. By virtue of being the Church Catechist, he was the acknowledged Headmaster as well as the school manager, three offices in one! He was quite effective in every respect. In a relative manner, he was accountable to the mission authority in Akoko, headed by the District Church Council Chairman.

The headmaster ordered me to put my right hand across my head (the customary way of finding out if a pupil was old enough to be enrolled, and my hand stretched beyond my left

ear. He did not hesitate to conclude that I was old enough. He then told my parents to prepare me for school soon.

Preparing me for school was not going to be as easy for my father as the headmaster presumed. School fees, uniform, slate and pencil or piece of chalk, would have to be provided. My father however told my mother that she would have to shoulder the entire responsibility of my schooling. His reason was not far-fetched; the children of my mother's senior wives were not sent to school, what right had I to ask to be sent to school? "This one will follow his brothers to the farm and all them would now fend for me in my old age; the only one whom I have sent to school has not made any head or tail of it; he is the son of the most senior wife. I allowed him to go to school to serve as example and I am yet to derive any benefit from white man's education. To send the youngest son of the youngest wife to school would be a waste of money and incur the jealousy of other wives," my father concluded.

My mother knew the implication of my father's decision; so, to her and Zachariah Ademola, my elder brother, this posed a challenge and they therefore decided to send me at all costs. This will be another opportunity for the family, since my brothers and sisters had earlier missed the opportunity, which was very painful to them.

My Brother, Z. Ademola had a friend, Mr. Lawrence Olaseinde Oyegoke, a Standard Six Certificate holder, who was a teacher. He was respected for his level of education in the community. He was relatively more enlightened and influenced my brother greatly. The pain of missing western education really hurt my brother so much that he decided to give me the opportunity of western education at whatever cost and to any level. He also felt equally bad that his immediate younger brother and younger sister, Elisha Olabode and Comfort Omolemi, missed the opportunity. He however,

sponsored them to learn some trade. Elisha was an apprentice in clothing-materials, while Comfort went to a sewing institute in Sapele. He thus began to play the role of father to all of us in every respect.

United School, Ifira-Ipesi

The first and only school that provided elementary education for the two communities of Ifira and Ipesi was United School, Ifira-Ipesi. It was located between the two towns – some seven to eight miles away from my house in Ifira and about four miles from Ipesi. This school was jointly founded by St. Peter's Anglican Church, Ifira, and St. John's Anglican Church, Ipesi. Customarily, such primary schools were founded side by side with churches. They helped in recruiting church membership. They were like twin sister institutions, growing together inter-relatedly.

The churches with their mission schools refined members educationally and morally for the services of God in churches to which the schools were attached. These members, who were well indoctrinated, served as choristers, choirmasters and on successful completion of their primary education, served as school teachers, clerks and church agents, etc. While in school, the church invested all available resources in them. The more resourceful they were made to be by adequate equipment or preparation, the more they would be capable of handling challenging church or school situations.

In January 1946, I recorded my first day at school. It was one of the most memorable events in my life. Armed with a pencil and a clean slate, my mother left me in care of my niece, Victoria Olayemi Ojomo, who was the first and only daughter of my eldest sister, Mrs Felicia Orebe Ojomo. Victoria, though older in age, started schooling before I came from Idogun. She led me step by step into the school system which she already knew very well. She just took me to her class, thinking that one

could go to any class of his choice. I sat by her side. The first few days and weeks passed by, I was allowed to stay in the class. I guess the class teacher too was as new as I was in the class. He probably could not differentiate new pupils from the old ones.

In Arithmetic and dictation periods, I did not have any difficulty because my niece was around to solve the problems by helping me to write the dictation on my slate. I did well in them like every other pupil. This self-deception continued for sometime, unknown to the classteacher and other classmates. I enjoyed doing it for sometime, not knowing that new comers had not been properly classified. It was a congested class where a dull pupil could not be easily detected.

The day of reckoning however came when I faced the reality of schooling. The headmaster came, tested us, and selected the best five pupils to move by promotion to Class 1A. To my utter surprise and disappointment, my niece was among them! Then a new teacher came. It was then I knew that my class was 1C. The new teacher loved to carry his cane with him always. He never parted with it for a second. I hated cane like hell! I quickly sat up. I feared and hated being caned. At Arithmetic and dictation, or any other test, I was always sad because my niece was no where to 'bail me out' again and the teacher would not allow anyone to cheat. I developed hatred for cane due to a sad experience I had in school.

One day, one of the teachers, Mr. S. O. Omogun, was caning Musa Abu, my cousin, among other late-comers. Either Musa carelessly stretched his hand close to his eyes to receive the lash, or the teacher applied much force as a result of which the cane splintered and bruised his eye. Musa fell down crying profusely, "My eye, my eye", holding the affected eye. Thinking that Musa was only pretending, the teacher landed another lash on his back! The nearest and only dispensary in the entire

Akoko east was in Ishua-Oke, nearly twenty kilometres away. Musa eventually lost one of his eyes permanently!

For the first time, I became aware that I was in school and alive to what was being taught in the class. At the end of the year, I was promoted to class 1A, then my niece moved to 2A. By June the same year, 1947, I had so much improved in learning that I was among the best ten pupils considered for (double) mid-year promotion to class 2A. I came to meet my niece again, this time as a classmate. I did not need to sit beside her because I could now work independently.

Looking back now, I could realise that even though I felt terribly bad for being left to work on my own in the class after the sudden promotion of my niece from my class, it was a divine action in disguise to save me from the comfort zone of relying on my niece's presence and help which looked good to me, but could ruin my education. What a big lesson that experience taught me!

In Class 2A, those of us who were new-comers had a very good rapport with the old members of the class. After six months, we were promoted to Standard One after which we were promoted to Standard Two in 1950. Here, we were exposed to serious classwork and at the end of the year, we did external examination set for Standard Two classes in all schools in Akoko East. My classmates were surprised when I came first in the promotion examination to Standard Three.

Because of this, some of them, like Jacob Omojomolo, Sunmola Alege, Victoria Olayemi Ojomo, (my niece), among other brilliant ones, were determined to outshine me in the new class. Among other classmates were Festus Lasisi Igboro (later Akinnibo), Hezekiah Sunday Owolabi, Festus Tayo Barber, Theresa Owolabi, Solomon Ayo Ajongbolo, Thomas Owadokun, Joseph Olowokere Ademuyiwa, among others. I actually shared the same seat with Olowokere Ademuyiwa.

Our time together in 1951, under Mr. G.O. Arogbehin, the class teacher, was cordial as it sharpened our desire for the next and apex class in the school. The end of the year promotion examination led us to Standard Four which was the highest class where past generations of students had ended their primary education. Thus, those of us who passed from Standard Three to Standard Four moved to the class, without any hope of furthering our education. In Std Four, we were lucky to have Mr. J.A. Daramola as our teacher. He was a very brilliant young man; a native of Omuo-Ekiti, who encouraged us to study further. He actually stimulated us educationally, himself being a secondary school leaver. The year 1952 was quickly running to its third quarter, and we were left with three months to finish Standard Four.

Suddenly, the news filtered around that the joint proprietors of St. Peter's Church, Ifira and St. John's Church, Ipesi, had searched for an 'Andrian' H.E. (Higher Elementary Certificate holder) from St. Andrew's College, Oyo. With a qualified certificated teacher from Oyo, the school had the immediate prospect of being raised to Standards Five and Six Classes. This good news cheered and raised people's hope beyond expression! Could it be true?

In January 1953, the speculations came to reality by the arrival of Mr. Ladipo Jegede, a product of St Andrew's College, Oyo. He was God's answer to our prayers. He was elaborately welcomed and lavishly entertained by the two proprietor-churches who were ready to give anything to make him feel comfortable and appreciated. He first resided in Ipesi, but soon moved to Ifira after two weeks. A prominent member of the Church, Chief Solomon Omodunbi, who was the Balogun of the Church, vacated the entire five-bedroom, first floor of his storey building to provide Mr. Jegede accomodation.

The new Headmaster, Mr. Ladipo Jegede did not delay in making far reaching changes in the school. He changed the landscape of the entire school, relocated the football pitch and turned the whole surrounding to a beautiful flower garden. All pupils were made to do the manual labour of reconstructing the entire school premises which an Inspector of Education was said to have described as 'beautiful as paradise on earth.' The entire school was no doubt one of the best and most beautiful in outlook in our area. Mr Ladipo Jegede was a lover of beauty; he practically demonstrated it.

In sporting activities, our school become the school to beat in the entire area. The school football team challenged Ishua-Ile St. Patricks' School team and St Michael's School, Ipe, and at both matches we had a hard-fought 1–0 win in one and a draw in the other. I remember that after one of the matches, I came back home, limping with swollen ankle-sprain because we all played bare-footed. None of us ever heard of soccer boots, let alone seeing one! I could not attend classes for days. After Iya had helped to treat my ankle with hot water and shea-butter rub, brother asked me the hard question, "Are you sent to school to play football or read your books?"

In track events, my niece, Victoria Olayemi Ojomo, was the fastest female runner. She was nick-named 'Eiye' (flying Bird). Victoria was an all-rounder; she was good at high jump, long jump and was one of the leading pupils in the class. As a result of her indoor and outdoor performances, she became very popular and prospective in the school. She was slim, outspoken and cheerful.

The months between June to November, 1953, were devoted to class work. The work schedule we had to cope with in Std Five was more tasking. We had a lot of notes to copy in various subjects while one junior teacher, Mr. John Ibitola (a personal assistant to Mr. Jegede) was 'employed' to do the job. The headmaster in his capacity as our teacher made us to

work so strenuously to cover the scheduled syllabus in a couple of months. At the end of the year, we did an external examination which was organised for Standard Five classes in all schools in Akoko. Mr Jegede was very impressed with the result that placed me in the first position in the entire Akoko East.

Mr. Egbuche who had long been the headmaster of St. Patrick's School, Ishua-Ile, was the one who came to invigilate at United School, Ifira-Ipesi. He demanded that I come to live with him in Ishua, but the request was turned down by my parents. Because of Mr. Jegede's love and interest for me and my education, he advised me strongly to go to his counterpart, Mr. Egbuche. I did not know that he was preparing to leave at the end of the year.

When Mr. Jegede announced to the proprietors his intention to leave at the end of the year, the entire communities were astonished. We were not told why Mr. Jegede decided to leave, having spent only one year. Why couldn't he reciprocate the lavish hospitality of the proprietors with at least two years' voluntary service to bring the school up to Std Six Class and consolidate it before leaving? Many people believed that since Mr. Jegede was a native of Emure-Ekiti, which is a geographically close neighbour to Akoko, he should feel comfortable to work in the community.

There were teachers in the school who worked closely with Mr Jegede. They included Messrs S. O.Olaiya (an Ekiti man); S.A. Suberu (from Ikaram); J. O. Jimba (from Ogbagi); S. O. Adegbojere (from Supare) among others. There were some of my mates who were close to me and were very friendly. They included Zaccheaus Ajagidi Ojo; his friend, Olaseboye; Philip Oyeleye; Solomon Ajongbolo and Samuel Lege Omolorun. Sunmola Alege and my niece, Victoria Olayemi Ojomo were two hard-working girls who competed very favourably with

boys in the class. Also were Jacob Omojomolo, who was very brilliant, Festus Lasisi Igboro, Hezekiah Sunday Owolabi, Moses Adedayo Arowolo, Joshua Bobola Ajiroba, Stephen Olaye Aborowa, Joseph Olowokere Ademuyiwa, among others.

Joseph Olowokere Ademuyiwa, one of those mentioned above, shared the same seat and desk with me. He had a sister, Eunice Olufunmilayo Ademuyiwa, who was in Std Four. I was fond of teasing and pulling her dress while playing on the field during break time. She came from Ibadan where she was brought up. I admired her Ibadan dialectal accent as she was the only pupil speaking the language in the school. I did not have the slightest inkling that, one day, she would be my wife! So we all painfully parted, following the sad news of the H.M.'s exit.

Our 'hard-working' headmaster decided to leave without appreciating the people's efforts and considering the consequences his action would have on the fate of the Standard Five pupils. All the out-going pupils in Std Five were back to square one as their hope to reach Std Six was dashed. What next? Where do we go for the Standard Six Class? We all scattered. Some never went beyond Standard Five! A few among the brilliant and average students who had no relations outside our immediate communities resorted to farm work, while others went into petty trade like carpentry and tailoring, while some unexpectedly became loiterers.

As for me and my niece, Victoria, there were two options: One was Ishua, where Mr. Egbuche was the headmaster and whose invitation I had declined, following my parents' advice. The second was St Paul's School, Idogun, where the Std Six facility was available. For the latter, my parents had their preference because my relation was there; it was my second home.

St. Paul's School, Idogun

The presence of my half-brother, Chief Samuel Omotoyi Ariwajoye (who had become a well-to-do father of the family) and his loving wife, Marian, among others, made us to prefer Idogun. In a short time, we saw the wisdom in my parents' God-guided decision. At St Paul's School, Idogun, I was being convinced beyond doubt that God was using human and material resources to bring meaning and value to my life. I also thought Victoria would enjoy the same grace, but alas, it was not so. Early in February 1954, my niece voluntarily withdrew from school as she had been put in the family way by a teacher in our previous school! Regrettably, that was how a professional misconduct of a teacher damaged the prospective career of a promising girl.

For the first time in my primary school life, I had a class teacher who never handled cane. He was Mr. E. Ekundayo David, a native of Ishua-Akoko. What a classic irony of life, that my first year class teacher in primary school never parted with his cane; he would use his cane to correct the slightest mistake, while my last year class teacher in Std Six never handled a cane at all! Not for one day did any offence attract corporal punishment by Mr David. Interestingly, we behaved well, as there was no record of misbehaviour in our class throughout the year!

Mr. E. E. David was the most ideal teacher I ever came across. He was so simple, dedicated and lovingly effective in teaching that none of us failed the First School Leaving Certificate Examination at the end of the year. He was a rare stuff of a teacher and a shining exemplar to many in the teaching profession. The headmaster, Mr. J.O. Omogbeja, was an Andrian, (a product of St Andrew's College, Oyo) who taught Std Five Class. He was a disciplinarian; an indigene of Idogun.

Meeting another Andrian, I knew immediately that God had a special purpose for bringing me to Idogun. He was very approachable, friendly and humorous. I was excited to meet and get myself introduced to him. I solicited his help to have me registered for the Common Entrance Examination with King's College, Lagos, as my first choice. Even though he was not my class teacher, he gladly accepted to coach me in Arithmetics; the assistance which helped me work ahead of the class on the Upper Standard Larcombe's Mathematics Textbook.

The idea of sitting for the examination came from Prince Joseph A. Adesunloye, who was my former headmaster in the United School, Ifira-Ipesi. At that time, he did not have the requisite qualification of a Grade Two or Higher Elementary (H.E.) to teach or head a school with Std Five Class. He knew about my brilliant performance before he was transferred to head St Peter's Primary School, Ifira. Prince Joseph Adesunloye, who later became the Oba (Olufira) of Ifira, was a great lover of education. He was my admirer, and mentor, who strongly instructed my brother to send me to King's College, Lagos. He was very sure that if I had the chance of sitting for the entrance exam, I would succeed and be admitted.

Armed with this instruction, as soon as St Paul's School, Idogun, re-opened in January 1954, I paid three shillings to the headmaster for the Common Entrance Examination fee. He announced at the assembly hall repeatedly at morning devotion, encouraging pupils to pay either for the common entrance or any college entrance examination, but nobody responded. After some months of fruitless efforts, the headmaster returned my three shillings. Almost immediately, I had a sudden burst of indignation and the headmaster was watching my reaction.

When he discovered that I was saddened for missing the opportunity, he consoled and encouraged me to go and find

out if the entrance form to Victory College, Ikare, was still available for sale. After the school hours, I left Idogun for Ifira, from there I went to Ikare, the following day. I purchased the late form for three, instead of the normal two shillings, completed and submitted it, only to be told to come for the exam the following Saturday. I nearly missed it! About two weeks later, I was invited for interview and after a couple of months, I received an admission letter. Mr. J. O. Omogbeja, the headmaster, and my class teacher Mr E. E. David, were very happy for me.

Alfred Eniafe Oluloro, an indigene of Ishara-Idogun later gained admission to Imade College, Owo. There were other brilliant boys in our class who were denied the opportunity of secondary education, either because their parents could not afford to send them, or they did not have people to enlighten them. One of such was Samson Tosin Adejori, a native of Owo. He played the lawyer in the 'Merchant of Venice' - the Story of Shylock by Shakespear. Samson recited brilliantly "The Quality of Mercy is not strained...", a very long passage. Tosin was a possible candidate for Law. We were friends and keen rivals in the class. His was a handicapped talent!

Despite my admission, I continued with my extra lessons with the headmaster. At the end of 1954, my happiest year in primary school, we were taken to Idoani Centre with Std Five pupils for joint Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination. I was happy to know later that I scored one hundred percent in Arithmetic.

One very impressive and unforgettable incident that would remain indelible in the memory of all 1954 generation of teachers and pupils in that school, was how Mr Omogbeja, the H.M. saved the life of a Std Five girl from ruin. She was infatuated by the dexterous performance of a grown-up Standard Six boy, one of the school footballers, who came from Lagos. The 'Lagos-

boy', as he was fondly called, was no doubt very good at playing football and was popularly admired by all. The said girl fell headlong into deep love (infatuation) with the boy, losing every reason. It got to the HM that they were having suspicious meetings after school hours.

One morning, after the regular morning devotion, the HM called the big boy out and he quizzed him over his relationship with the girl. He then began to stammer. He was made to mount the back of another huge boy as he was properly and severally lashed. The girl was seriously warned not to indulge in such unlawful act again. That shame and disgrace put a final stop to their clandestine love.

The girl later became a graduate teacher, Chief Inspector of Education, in Lagos. She was married to a clergyman and they were blessed with four children; one was a medical doctor, another, a veterinary doctor, and the third an engineer. Today, she cannot write her autobiography without mentioning the role Chief J. O. Omogbeja played in her life.

My Secondary Education

Divinely guided to Victory College

Both my mother and brother Zachariah were very happy about my admission to Victory College, Ikare, even though they knew that our intended choice was painfully missed. They started to plan towards my resumption. Their plan was very solid, wise and helpful. Even though ‘brother’, as I fondly and rightly addressed him, did not himself attend any formal school, he however, by his self-efforts, through adult education, learnt to read and write. He had many educated people as his friends and through them found out more information about the two colleges. He learnt that Victory College, as a mission school, had Bible Knowledge together with other courses in their programme while King’s College, a secular institution, did not. Some teachers who lived in our house, also gave him information. To me, it did not make much difference. The joy of leaving primary for secondary school enveloped me with excitement, not minding what and how they teach. With my hope in King’s College now dashed, I set my aspirations on Victory College, Ikare.

My brother prayed fervently and anxiously looked forward to seeing me admitted into secondary school. My admission to Victory College, Ikare, therefore was a fulfilment of his dream and answered prayers. He and my mother could not hide their joy. He went to report to Prince J.A. Adesunloye who was disappointed that I missed the admission to King's College, Lagos. He however congratulated me and prayed that God would empower my brother to train me.

My parents were both determined to support my secondary education. My father relied on the little income from the sale of the products from the farm, even though these could not go far in my preparations.

To douse such a debilitating and frustrating experience, my brother collected sixty pounds (£60.00) from his co-operative society, asking to be allowed to have his turn prematurely. Part of the money was spent on purchasing school uniform, a pair of white canvass shoes, a pair of white trousers for Sunday wear and for chapel service. One multi-purpose iron box, big enough to contain all my belongings was purchased. These items almost gulped seventy-five percent of the money from the cooperative rotational contributions, with barely twenty-five percent left to pay my first term boarding and school fees.

Mother, on her own part, was ready to cooperate with brother for the realisation of my secondary education. Payment of my school fees and purchase of school materials was not strange to her. She had done this for some time, with money from the sales of her domestic animals.

Changes within the Family

The years between 1952 and 1955 witnessed a lot of changes in the family. My mother taught my brothers to go into cash and food crops production. They planted yam, maize, beans, cotton,

etc., for commercial purposes. Brother sent me to Idogun for a load of special cassava sticks which were planted and eventually used for garri.

When 'Iya' (meaning 'mother', as she came to be generally addressed) retired from farmwork, she took to weaving, dyeing, spinning, and rearing of domestic animals such as hens, sheep, goats, dogs, etc. Iya also traded in onion, pepper, melon, vegetables, shea-butter, potash, pap and akara. For me, no day passed without being asked to hawk one article or the other – a business that I solely did when my sister, Comfort, left for Sapele. My two nieces, Victoria Olayemi and Ruth Adunni, assisted me when they shortly lived with Iya.

My mother, a very simple and trusting christian woman, was well loved and respected for her ability to manage crisis in the family. By her stance of honesty and just behaviour, people gradually became attracted to her in the community. One thing that marked her out was her selfless service given to young nursing mothers who left their babies with her for care, pending their return from market or farm. Thus, she became true to her name 'Iya' (meaning Mother) to everybody, the name she bore and acted till death. Her usual reaction to any situation that caused worry, pain or anxiety to anyone seeking assistance was, "*Olorun a se, k'ama gbadura*" (meaning, God will do it; or take care, let's continue to pray). In a similar vein, she assured brother that my admission to the College was God ordained, as a result of my God-given potential. So, she claimed as usual, "*Olorun a se, k'ama gbadura*". (God will help, let's continue to pray).

In this way, mother consistently gave unfailing encouragement to brother. I did not know what gave my mother this sense of confidence as she could neither read the Bible nor sing from *Iwe Orin Mimo* (Yoruba Hymn and Prayer Book), even though she attended Sunday services regularly, heard

the sermon and sang Yoruba choruses at prayer meetings. I wonder how brother personally and obediently subscribed to this belief, which I guess, was attributable to an uncommon faith. The Bible rightly says, "God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

A night prior to my resumption, mother made me sleep beside her as we had a lengthy discussion, advising me about how I should behave in school. She rightly touched on some social, environmental and educational challenges. She eventually stopped when she noticed through my response that I was already feeling drowsy.

However, I woke up at about 3.00am and heard my caring and loving mother praying earnestly to God on my behalf:

"O God... go there and prepare the place for him, save him from illness, let him not commit any offence, save him from harm, give him listening ears to his lessons, let people be kind and show mercy and love to him...."

That parental prayer changed my life entirely; I was emotionally overwhelmed and completely submitted to her inspiring spiritual guidance which had profound influence on my life thereafter.

Journey to Victory College

By 5.00am in the morning, my brother set out on foot from Ifira to Ikare, carrying my box containing all my belongings. I joined the company of seniors Timothy Adesunloye (the son of my mentor, Prince J.A. Adesunloye), Bernard Sunday Obasoro, Andrew Ojo Balogun and Samuel Segun Obasoro (the Vicar's children) who were trekking to Ishua to board a lorry owned by one transporter called Salami. Samuel Segun Obasoro, son

of Rev. A. A. Obasoro, (the Vicar of my home Church) and I were going to College for the first time. The transportation service was available once a day from Auchi to Owo via Ikare. All travellers from Ipesi, Ifira, Ishua, Sosan, etc., going to Owo or Ikare would wait at Ishua-Oke road junction. It usually stopped over at Ishua to carry passengers between 1.pm and 2.pm.

At about 2.00pm, we arrived Victory College from the eastern axis. And lo and behold, there at the college gate was my brother, already seated on my big box! This singular act by my brother, demonstrated beyond any iota of doubt, his passion for my education. It became my eternal reminder of lifelong gratitude to him. While I managed to carry my box to the dormitory, he went back on a return trek home. I hardly could imagine how long it would take him to reach home that day!

Entering one of the big rooms of the giant storey buildings was like being dropped on the threshold of eternity. I peeped outside through the immovable wooden louvre window - My brother had gone. Now seniors Obasoro, Adesunloye and Balogun had all disappeared. "Prepare your bed! Take your box to the box-room! Go out! Come in! etc.," were certain voices that began to announce orders. I began to learn new words and fast too. The thought came to my mind that I was now in a new world. Strange questions crossed my mind which I could not answer, and about many things which were not of immediate relevance.

Victory College, Ikare, an Ionian School, was the first and only secondary school in Akokoland for many years. It was founded by the C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society), in 1948 as part of series of secondary schools which started its spread from Lagos. The Rev. (later Archdeacon) J.F. Akinrele, a native of Ondo and Mr. D.I. Bada, a native of Ikare, were the Principal and Vice-Principal respectively. Mr. Alfred O. Ogedengbe, a

native of Akungba, was senior tutor as well as the Agriculture teacher who were trained in West Indies. He later went fully into politics and became Minister of Works in the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo's defunct Action Group-led government of Western Region of Nigeria. Chief Ogedengbe was the first indigene of Akoko to assume such a high political office. Other prominent tutors included Messrs Ita, a Calabar man who had Inter-B.A and Inter-BSc; Aganbi Olayinka (later ordained Anglican priest) of Ife; S.A. Baruwa, an Andrian (Pivotal) from Ijebu; J.O. Ariwoola, an Andrian (Pivotal) from Ijeshaland; B.B. Ojiako, an Ibo in charge of Woodwork, working with O' Dwyer, a renowned West Indian Woodwork technologist; B.A. Ayodele, an Andrian-trained Geography teacher, a native of Ikare who later became an Ambassador for Nigeria; Joseph O.A. Akadiri, another Andrian popularly nicknamed "personality" by students because of his qualities of imposing physical appearance and character. Mr Akadiri, a Classics undergraduate of University of Ibadan taught us Latin. An extraction of Ipesi-Akoko, Joseph Oladele Akadiri later became an Ambassador for many years. There were other tutors whom I passed through their tutorship briefly, but left long-lasting impacts on my life. They included old boys of the school who were retained to work in the college, having excelled academically. They were Messrs S. T. Orimolade, our Year One class teacher, Benjamin O. Olumuyiwa (later Rev. Canon), Alfred O. Awobuluyi (later University Professor) and Samuel Adebisi Ogedengbe (later Chief and Federal Minister of Labour and Productivity).

As soon as the second term of my first year began, I started having financial difficulties. The money raised by my brother through the cooperative society soon fizzled out. The passion of my mother and brother for my secondary school education dwindled and was threatened. My hope and burning desire

to get properly settled down to serious learning with the rest of my twenty-seven classmates began to shake. My brother rose to the imminent financial crisis by mobilising all resources available to him to pay my fees for the second and third terms. It was not easy getting the fees paid.

Getting to know about my difficulty to get my fees paid, some senior students registered sympathetic support for me. Prominent among them was Senior Bernard Sunday Obasoro, the son of my home Church Vicar, who was in class three. He was very generous and loving to junior students which made him popular. He encouraged and advised me to write to the principal in the name of my brother, asking for permission to leave the boarding house at once in order to be relieved of the financial burden.

A Mentor Indeed!

If there was a student I regarded as a mentor of mine in Victory College, it was one final year student in my dormitory, by name, Moshood, from Ijebu. He was the first to sympathize with me. Each time I was sent home for fees, he felt sad and advised candidly that I should not be disappointed, but persevere. I was convinced that if he had extra pocket money, he would have gladly paid to relieve me. Mr Moshood Alebiosu's attitude was a contrast to that of our dormitory prefect who was a Christian; he knew that I had financial difficulties, but he was less concerned. There was no time he expressed sympathy. I had two or more college guardians, but comparably, the role played by Moshood Alebiosu was more than that of a guardian, he was affectionately fatherly. His encouraging words helped me a lot to continue in college, urging me to write to let the Principal know that my brother could not keep me in the boarding house any longer.

By the end of my first year, at least four of such letters in my brother's name, demanding either my release from the boarding, or expressing my imminent withdrawal from school had been written and delivered to the Principal, Rev. J.F. Akinrele. His reluctance to release me was probably due to his doubt about the authenticity of my reason for leaving the boarding house. There were students who deceived the school authority by collecting boarding fees from their parents without staying inside the hostel.

During December holiday, I met some of my old primary school friends who were employed as 'pupil teachers.' I was very fascinated and I made up my mind that, on getting back to school in January 1956, if the principal still refused my withdrawal from the hostel, I would immediately return home to look for a teaching appointment. I saw that as a way to end my continued suffering as 'debtor-student' in the college. While planning this, I discovered that my First School Leaving Certificate which I had sent home by post since my first term in school, had not been received. It was lost in transit. So, if I had no certificate, there would be no teaching appointment for me. Thus, my plan to go to the Teachers' College became finally foiled. I therefore kept the aborted plan to myself.

The Great Relief

On resumption however, the Principal had approved my application for day-studentship. As a day-student, my fees dropped from twelve pounds, ten shillings (£12.10s) to three pounds, ten shillings (£3.10s) per term. Despite this huge reduction in my fees, the financial problem did not finally disappear, but it was a great relief. But one fact dawned on me, that while my erstwhile headmaster, prince J.A. Adesunloye (later Oba), wanted me to go to King's College, Lagos, and my brother agreed to sponsor me, I too, earnestly desired to go to

King's College. But God had His own plan. It is often said that 'man proposes, God disposes.' The word of God says, "We walk by faith and not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7) One can now wonder what would have happened if I had gained admission to King's College without adequate funds for fees. Where would I have gone to when sent out for fees? We least understood the plan God had for me when we witnessed the disappointment. God, who had fore-known the end from the beginning, did not allow our plan, though, very good, to materialise. God's purposes, though not as lofty as ours, turned out to be best for us at last; it was convincingly clear to us.

Some of my teachers in primary school saw me as being brilliantly successful and promising, especially in promotion examinations, and so this impression caused them to have a big plan for me. I gained admission to Victory College with ease, with confidence and steam of aspiration for further learning, such that was burning in me from primary school. I thought that I was going to settle down to real learning. I felt very excited and challenged by the presence of similarly brilliant and clever chaps who were also admitted from local towns and villages in Akoko and from far places like Ondo, Akure, Ekiti, Owo, Sabongidda-Ora, Benin, Ibadan, Oshogbo, the present Kwara, Kogi, Delta States, etc. Among my classmates were remarkably brilliant ones like Joel Seinde Arogbofa, an Oka indigene, Zacheaus Adeyemi, a native of Ipe-Akoko, Samuel Ola Ologun, Franklin Akadiri and George Oshere (later George Ayodele).

Joel proved himself exceptionally cleverer than everyone in the class early, and his excellent academic performance at the end of the first year promotion examination earned him double promotion. He came first, beating the second position by a wide margin, thus gaining the commendation of the Principal and other members of staff.

Then entire members of the class wondered what contributed to Joel Arogbofa's ability that gave him the outshining profile which earned him double promotion. To excel so surprisingly was an embarrassment to a class, the majority of whose members were trying to adjust to college study lifestyle. But how much confidence and challenge Joel's brilliance engendered in his mates, was left to everyone's conjecture. One very impressive thing was that Joel matched his academic brilliance with humility, gentleness and good human relations. After sometime, other classmates with potential intellectual talents started coming up.

Many years later, promising young Joel attained further education at the premier University of Ibadan, after which he taught in various institutions. He had romance with politics at the local and state levels. He even had the unique opportunity of teaching in his alma mater, holding a chieftaincy title, thus becoming 'Chief Joel Seinde Arogbofa.' Joel was one of the first old boys to head the school as Principal, the position which gave him a rare chance of translating his dream for the College into reality.

Among my other classmates were many young, but prospective academic stars whose lives and performances challenged and inspired me. We impacted one another in various ways, sharing fellowship of joy and sadness, with life-long impressions. Among them was Franklin Akadiri from Ikeram who had a long absence from school due to a sickness. On coming back, he worked hard to be among those leading in the class; he even became the college Javelin champion and medal winner in the IAONIAN inter-collegiate sports. Although I was not very close to Franklin during our college days, I admired him for his humility, resourcefulness, academic brilliance and spirit of sportsmanship. He was in Lennon House while I was in Phillips House. There were two other classmates

with whom I was close, Samuel Ola Ologun and George Oshere (later Ayodele). They were from Oka and Epinmi respectively. I loved and associated with them because of their brilliant academic performance and spirit of hardwork.

Experience as a Houseboy

1955, my first year in Victory College, brought me face to face with stark reality of another phase of life. It ushered me into a threshold of suffering and difficulty which impeded my studies for my first three years in the college.

I resumed in school in January 1956, only to discover that, as a day-student, I needed an accommodation outside the college campus. I would have to fend for myself. But to breathe the air of freedom from the trauma of thoughts and fears of crippling boarding debt was to me an over-whelming joy. An untold relief came to my mind and I quickly went round to search for accommodation.

To my greatest surprise, on contacting Mr. S.A. Baruwa, one of the tutors and a product of St. Andrew's College, Oyo, he readily accepted to have me live with him. Being an housemaster, he lived in an apartment within the College. What an uncommon and unexpected act of hospitable kindness!

Already, Mr. Baruwa had two cousins, Muri and Deji, who were living with him. Mr. Baruwa was one of the very friendly teachers in the school; he was jovial, loving and humorous. The thought this act of kindness evoked in me was the fulfilment of my mother's prayer that people would be kind and helpful to me. Mr. S.A. Baruwa, an old Andrian, taught the lower classes Arithmetic, English, Bible Knowledge and Geography. All he knew about me was that I was one of those attending his classes. In age, I was older than Muri and Deji, the two boys living with Mr Baruwa, who were attending primary school. Deji was young and incapable of doing much

petty housework. I assumed the position of leadership to handle domestic duties, though Muri was the closest in relating to and taking orders from our master. As a student attending many subjects taught by Mr. Baruwa, I was always at his beck and call; available for domestic chores, especially on market days when soup and other foodstuffs had to be made ready. To be a houseboy in those days, one must be able to do much of house chores and cookery. Even when one had never had a 'go' at cooking, once you became one, automatically you were assumed to be able to cook.

In no time, I learnt a lot from Muri who had the ability to prepare food at the shortest possible time. 'Eba' (cassava meal) was the easiest and most common to prepare for lunch for a hungry master after his busy day. Muri, Deji and I enjoyed our stewardship and fellowship, for as long as we served together.

Life for me in the classroom front was gradually becoming lackadaisical. A couple of difficult experiences, which would form part of unforgettable chapter of my life history was setting in. The reduction of my fees to three pounds ten shillings per term, gave me much mental relief as a day-student; it gave my brother psychological respite, though in actual financial situation, at home, it was not much easier to source. My brother had to pay back the sixty pounds he took from the cooperative society at five pounds monthly instalments which was not easy for him to pay along with my fees. When my brother could not get the loan paid back as and at when due, stiff opposition rose against him. He left home for Okitipupa Farm Settlement to hire himself out for money as a daily paid labourer. At that time, Mr. (later Chief) Zacchaeus Ayo Idowu, a native of Ifira, was the Agricultural superintendent in charge of the settlement. When he heard that my brother had difficulty in paying my fees, he offered to give him employment. Mr. Z. A. Idowu was a loving, patriotic

youth leader who had special interest in youths' education. He had been keenly interested in my education. He thought he could by this way assist my brother to raise the money to pay my fees. But alas, the daily pay was not enough for feeding, transportation from Okitipupa township to the farm settlement, and accommodation, let alone having any surplus for my fees. After a couple of months, he sadly returned home poorer than he left.

Meanwhile, the situation turned worse for brother Zachariah at the homefront, while I too was worst hit at school. Economic situation within the homestead became actually precarious; only my other brother, Elisha Olabode, now married, stayed at the homebase, to fend for the family.

God graciously guided brother Zachariah with Elizabeth Ajoke, his wife (married from Idogun) who left for Okpe in Bendel State (the present Edo State). There, they found plenty of palm oil, palm kernel, etc., to sell. They also had fertile land to cultivate food crops, the sale of which they hoped would improve their economy.

As a Journey Walker

At the school front, the level of work I had to cope with also doubled. Simultaneously, the intensity of my desperation engulfed me in sorrow and utter upset. Every Monday morning, the college bursar, Prince A.A. Latunde, would go round to send out debtors from classes. This he did regularly every week and many times he repeated it on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Many times, I hid behind the classroom till the bursar returned to office. If by the next day, or two or three days later, he went round and found me again in class, he would be furious and threaten to report me to the principal. Whenever he seriously ordered me to go to the principal with him, I would

tell him that my brother would be coming to see the principal by the weekend. I employed all possible ploy to avoid being sent home, to enable me attend classes, at least for one or two days. Monday through Wednesday, I knew that at the end of classes on Friday, I would at once leave for Ifira for my fee, which anyway was not always there.

Trekking from Ikare to Ifira, through the old untarred road, a distance of over 30 kilometres, was tedious for a form two pupil to embark upon after school hours. At times, if I went on Friday, I would not reach home until half-past ten or eleven in the night. My return journey after Sunday service many times, ended at Oka at night, from where I would leave for Ikare the following morning. With no shoes on, it was most dreadful to trek this road in the fifties, most especially in the dark between Ekpeme-Ishua-Ile, then through Old-Shosan to Ifira. The road adjoining those villages at that time, passed through thick forests. Though it was supposed to be a motorway, no vehicle plied it. It was more commonly used as footpath with many farm tributaries. The road, shaded by isolated tree-branches was darkened like half-lighted tunnel by night. The entire road could be incredibly festured with harmful reptiles at night time. Stories were rife of adroit hunters who had at one time killed dangerous animals inhabiting the surrounding forests along Ikare-Ekpeme, Ishua-Shosan-Ifira.

The memory of such awful stories was enough to frighten and deter any young class one or two pupil from embarking on night trek along the road. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "You never know how much you really believe anything, until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you."

I did not know that I had such audacity to face hazards of midnight journeys alone, even through jungles, until circumstances beyond my control forced me. An unusual courage entered my heart and fear disappeared like vapour.

Most convincing, empowering and comforting, were the ways God spoke to me through His words in Psalms 23, 24 and 121. I was profoundly inspired by these Psalms which I knew and recited offhand on several occasions. I had unshaken belief in the words as they toughened, becoming part of me. The following are some excerpts from these psalms:

The Lord is my Shepherd...He guides me (His sheep) in paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me... – Psalm 23.

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." – Psalm 24.

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills,- where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip.

...the Lord watches over you.

...the Lord will watch over your coming and going, both now and for evermore." – Psalm 121

The above Psalms that I learned and recited formed the bulk of my prayer, with the Lord's prayer. Many times, I recited the Psalms so loudly that anyone coming from the opposite direction, or passing by, from some distance away would assume that two or more people were discussing. This was the pattern of my experience in the days when, like a journey-walker, I frequently trekked that road for my fees. It is still miraculous to me that I did not encounter any untoward incident in all my late night journeys !

Managing Jeers and Sneers

Life in the classroom was not smooth-sailing for me. Every morning, Monday through Thursday, my mind was often at the door, expecting when the bursar would open the class door anytime, shouting along the veranda, “debtors, come out! debtors stand up! come out!... etc,” such orders invariably stopped some teachers abruptly without excuse. Most teachers were apparently used to this practice and gave the college bursar due cooperation and respect.

Each time the bursar came to my class, it was unmistakably a visit to send me out. When he merely walked along the corridor, I was scared to sight him. Some of my mates were in the practice of mimicking him by calling out to me before his arrival, “Debtors,...go out, Owadayo, do you hear that? Go out, debtors go out.”

My case was often met with jeers, sneers and costly jokes, which could evoke anger or bad temper. At times, I became ashamed and hurt by cruel and unkind criticism and ridicule. However, there were a good number of my mates whose hearts flowed with the milk of kindness and sympathy for me. One of those so well-disposed was Michael Kola Elebe, (later Orisadahunsi) who shared the same seat with me. Another was Josiah Adedeji, a native of Ondo; we called each other ‘Jucundus’.

I did not quite understand why I refused to react negatively or succumb to the daunting situation interfacing with my academic pursuit. Was God in control of the situation to give me a new perspective of His inscrutable plan? He did not allow me to be frustrated or to develop bitterness against anyone. I got hurt but He made me less hurtful or resentful and able to look beyond it, by turning it to humour to gain a wider acceptability. He made me still look for understanding to share companionship with all. The ability to endure pain and taunt

and still be friendly with all, without being incapacitated was due to one and only one thing – God’s grace.

My Second Year

1956, which was my second year in Victory College was tough, rough and appeared unusually long. How I managed to weather through was a miracle to me. I spent the first and second terms living with Mr. S.A. Baruwa, who for one reason or the other, graciously released me to live with Mr. B.B. Ojiako, an Ibo Woodwork tutor. I spent the third term with Mr. Ojiako, assisting Tony (Anthony) his houseboy to do the housework. Mr. Ojiako, one of the housemasters, was the assistant woodwork lecturer to Mr. O’Dwyer, a West-Indian. Then, I was still shuttling between Ikare and Ifira for my fees in my second year.

At the end of 1956, I was promoted to class three. This promotion gave me a ray of hope that if all was well with my brother in the coming year, I stood a good chance of making a success of my secondary education. But would my promotion from class two to three guarantee easy pass from form three to four? That would depend on how much time would be available for my studies, free from being sent home for fees.

One senior student told me without intending to scare me, “The upper you go, the hotter it becomes,” meaning, my next class promotion exam would be harder to pass than the previous one, that is, from year two to three would be easier than three to four. Anyone who passes through secondary school would not contest this. Even though he did not mean to frighten me, I naturally had fear for what was lurking in the next class.

In the year 1957, I was seated among my classmates again. Some of them who were friendly with me called me fond names, making allusions to my financial position, while others

became sincerely sympathetic with me. I cherished both of them and pretended not to be upset because I needed them to update me on what I missed each time I was absent from class on account of fees. I valued their love and readiness to assist in this way.

Another significant thing happened to me early in the year, the effect of which lasted the whole three terms of the year. Mr. Samuel Adebisi Ogedengbe, a young Victory College product, who was retained as tutor requested that I live with him. Thus, my houseboy service again shifted from Mr. B. B. Ojiako to Messrs. S.A. Ogedengbe and Alfred O. Awobuluyi. The latter was another ex-student, similarly retained, following his very good result. Two of them were living together. Mr. A. O. Awobuluyi also had Kola to live with him as houseboy. The two masters lived together, ate together, had and did a lot of things academically. They were distinguished final students in the previous year and so were retained on merit. Mr. Awobuluyi was the senior prefect, while Mr. Ogedengbe too was one of the college prefects. They were most avidly ambitious. There was a keen competition between these two aspiring scholars as they were preparing hard for the Advance Level General Certificate Exam (GCE A/L.). I really admired them.

However, they soon parted company as they were separately accommodated the following term. When Mr. Ogedengbe moved to one of the staff quarters outside immediate students' hostel, I moved there with him. Mr. Awobuluyi too was allocated a nearby quarters and Kola too moved there with him.

My stay as the only houseboy to Mr. S. A. Ogedengbe was more energy-sapping and time-consuming than before. My master loved punctuality, decency and neatness. He cherished these as virtues undergirding the principles of his

life. These were carefully affirmed and strictly observed at his breakfast, lunch and dinner. His laundries too were not exempted. He was a man of fashion and impressive, high social profile. He was kind, generous and considerate. He was always ready to help the needy.

On my part, I had to devote more of my time to ‘delicacies’ within my ability, which necessitated taking time off-class to purchase soup ingredients and foodstuffs, etc., usually on Oshele market days.

The number of times I used to trek to Ifira fortnightly for fee was considerably reduced to three or four times a term, because God had wonderfully improved the financial condition of my brother and his wife at Okpe-Bendel (Edo State). The time that I was using to travel to Ifira was now devoted to house-cleaning, washing and ironing. These were not all the routine; I also engaged in fetching firewoods against the coming week.

In the dry, dusty and humid environment in those days, when houses were not air-conditioned, cleaning of the house was done everyday of the week. It could be dust and mud as one walked the streets, bare-earth, where pavements and corridors were not covered with cement, thus we had the compulsory duty of cleaning the house daily. In those days, we lived and mingled with the crowd of students without footwear. How many students had footwears in those days? Even, how many footballers wore soccer boots when playing!

Such memorable recollections, as crude though as they were, showed the stark reality of hazard to which pupils were exposed. Being a houseboy to a master who could be visited by colleagues or students on a number of times a day called for repeated cleaning and sweeping of the house. After all these house chores after school hours, one inevitably becomes tired and drowsy before night study time. But you dare not sleep in the face of much to read at night in preparation for the next

day's classwork. One may even have notes (given when one was away to the market) to copy and read up.

Confirmation

In the midst of all the crippling engagements, I found time for some extra-curricular activities, like preparation for confirmation under the leadership of the College chapel chaplain, the Rev. Ronald Howarth. At the completion of my preparation and learning of the catechism, the Right Revd. S.O. Odutola, Anglican Bishop for Ondo/Benin Diocese, came all the way from Ondo to do our confirmation in July, 1957.

At last, in 1957, my third year in the college, with all its trail of trauma, fears and anxieties, and the cloistered domestic chores that I had to cope with, all choking my cluttered academic schedules, sluggishly dragged to a successful end. My result in the promotion examination was good and thus, I successfully managed to sail through the storm of that year.

Before proceeding on Christmas vacation, I went to my master, Mr. S.A. Ogedengbe, to thank him for his love, care and affection and for tolerating my inefficiencies. He appreciated my gesture; I then humbly begged him not to expect me back by January, 1958.

As I mused over the passage of these three years, I realised how much my understanding of the situation in College called for; they were years of wrestling with crippling financial obstacles which made me doubt, going by the lesson taught me by life itself, if I could walk tall again in the class! I struggled, but it was not going to be the same again. It was like being in the middle of a financial crisis, academic depression and at the same time looking up to God for a brighter future. In God's own way and wisdom, He made me weather through the financial storm and academic

feat. He gave me a ray of hope and confidence to keep my eye on a possible tomorrow. As I resolved to turn my back to houseboy stewardship, I focused on a more challenging risk of self-reliance. So, I quickly and seriously searched for accommodation within the College premises.

1958 – A Year of Rewarded Risks

In this year, I decided to take some major steps without minding the cost. What gave me the courage was my faith in God who made me pass through the past three years successfully. First, I decided to stay on my own in order to devote more time to my studies and it was most surprising to see how many students who were in the same situation followed suit. The situation exposed me to another phase of life – learning to be independent and not to be a burden to others.

Along Ikare-Arigidi road, adjacent to Victory College, was an uncompleted old storey building, owned by one retired Revd. Obayan, a native of Akunnu. His nephew who was in Victory College gave me express permission to live in the house, but wondered how I could live there alone. The house appeared long abandoned with shattered doors and shutters, as nothing gave me the impression that anyone lived in it before. Whatever was the condition of the house, I had consolation from the certainty that it provided a roof over my head. The joy of being on my own gave me the courage not to bother about the cost. The ‘freedom’ so desired and realised would be to manage risks creatively, to devote more time to studies and to avoid the risk of aborting my education.

As a day-student, the ‘freedom’ that I had did not exempt me from other life challenges such as financial scarcity and starvation that can cause academic setbacks. Even though I did not have all my fees paid on time, I was satisfied that I was in Form Four, and I had more time to spend in the class than

before. At times, I had part of the fee given me on resumption, and the remaining sent with foodstuffs, brought by my niece and brother's wife, who out of their concern for me, left their daily duty to embark on a long trek from Ifira to Ikare in the middle of the term.

This supply of foodstuffs was in lieu of extra or pocket money. I often had compassion for my brother for sending extra money to support me. When money was not forthcoming and I could not tell where it would come from, I sometimes became emotionally down.

The second term of the year 1958 came with unexpected optimism. One Stephen Olaye Aborowa, a native of Ipesi and a form three pupil came, asking for permission to live with me in the house, I readily welcomed him. A fortnight later, another classmate of his, Nathaniel O. Ajayi by name, (later a Physics Professor, University of Benin) a native of Uro-Akoko, came to ask for a place to live in. And like a dream, Joshua Oki, another and a native of Oka-Akoko, Giwa (alias, 'Giwa Baba') a native of Arigidi and Ilesanmi from Omuo (later a Medical Doctor) came in succession, looking for accommodation. Before I knew it, the house was full of co-tenants; a place that was quiet and dreary four months before, suddenly turned out to be a beehive.

When I faced the risks of moving to the isolated, dilapidated building, I never expected that I would experience such a soul-lifting turn-out that later brought hope, harmonious fellowship and beneficial cooperation which was witnessed when we lived and worked together as a team in a mini-dormitory. It proved to me beyond doubt, that there is no situation out of which God cannot work some good.

An unimaginable hope overwhelmed my fear and anxiety and turned all that was near failure and disappointment to success. I learnt by experience that wherever there is potential

for pain and suffering, there is also potential for perseverance and pleasure. This was so far a unique occasion that gave me happiness and pleasure among fellow students in the school. It also made me see life events from the perspective of the divine, that there is meaning with purpose in everything. God will not allow anything to happen to us that He will not turn to His good and praise-worthy account. Even though I did not make much sense out of the situations which I passed through at the time, I realised later that with God, I was able to wrest meaning from them. I also recognised my human weakness and short-sightedness by recollecting that God's ways are truly inscrutable. Even then, this did not form the last of all God's purpose that was being worked out in my life.

To God's glory and pleasant surprise of us all, the end of the year 1958 brought us joyous celebrations of marking our success and promotion. For me, it was a mixed feeling of joy and sadness because I was going to spend the final year in the boarding house which will make me part ways with my roommates.

1959 – Year of Destiny

The year 1958 came to an end like a dream! I was promoted to Class Five, my final year!! Could it be true?

I spent the Christmas holiday with my brother and his kind wife, Elizabeth Ajoke, at Okpe. That being my last and final holiday, I rendered some assistance to my brother in his farmwork. He and his wife were happy on hearing that I was promoted to class five which was going to be my final year. But I quickly let them know that all finalists were required to be boarders, by implication, my fee would move up again from three pounds ten shillings, to twelve pounds, ten shillings, per term. To my pleasant surprise, my brother reacted, "Don't worry, God will do it." Those words of encouragement were

echoed in my heart, reminiscent of my mother's usual assuring words. By a way of removing doubt and fear from my mind, his wife affirmed, "Whatever it will cost, even up to selling my clothes, we will sponsor you to the successful completion of your course." This reassuring statement showed her avowed passion for my education, sharing same ambition and determination with her husband.

Elizabeth Ajoke and my brother were like soul mates who faithfully shared vision and intimacy, free from inhibitions. A humble and simple woman, Elizabeth did not have formal education herself. She desired and pined for it direly. Consciously or unconsciously, Elizabeth made that statement of faith with a confidence that left a significant impression in my life. At the time of writing this memoir, to the glory of God, her son, John Oluseyi Owadayo is a clergyman, a Supervising Archdeacon in the Diocese of Ibadan North.

Back to Boarding House

By January 1959, I went straight from Okpe to school, with all the money saved up for my fee, which amounted to a total cash of ten pounds, and ten shillings. Before I left, my brother promised to send me the remaining amount soon. For the first time, I had extra money for books.

Unexpected Cheering News!

Unexpectedly, another joy was awaiting me in the college. On the first day of resumption, immediately after morning devotion, the Principal read the names of students who had been given scholarship by Akoko Local Council Authority. Most unexpectedly, and probably most embarrassing too, my name was among those awarded! Even though the award covered only school fees, it came unawares and as a great relief. How I wish it had come earlier!

My mind went back to the time when again and again I was sent out on account of school fees, which now would be paid by the Local Authority. If anyone asked me, I did not know who recommended me for the award. I guess that God moved the principal to do so, as he was well aware of my financial predicament.

I remember that two of my classmates, Bayo Rotimi and Tunde Afolabi were awarded, and began to enjoy the old Western Regional Government Scholarship from year one. Such scholarships were neither based on academic brilliance nor on conditional students' insolvency. My award however came as a far-reaching relief for the rest of the year.

Final year students were made to take their studies and other college activities very seriously. We had to sit for the final examination at the end of the year, but before then, the Geography Society had an excursion to Sapele River Saw Mill. We were piloted by Mr. Bisi Ogedengbe, the Geography tutor for lower classes, while Mr. (later Chief) E.O. Olugboja, the Geography tutor for upper classes, was otherwise engaged. It was very rewarding for all our mates who were visiting that area for the first time. All students offering Geography in the West African School Certificate Examination, as well as those offering Additional Mathematics were made to work extra hours because we were also preparing for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Examination too.

In August 1959, three months to Senior Cambridge Exams, a paralysing disappointment struck when our Additional Maths master, Mr. E.U. Ugboma, went back to University without completing our syllabus. His sudden departure terribly affected us, as a result, none of us passed the entrance exam to the HSC of Ibadan Grammar School. I doubt if any one passed it in the WAEC either, the reason for mass failure was not far-fetched. We spent only three months on the syllabus that was to take two years.

The Change that Shook Victory College

The Principal of the College, Rev. J.F. Akinrele, who had served for nearly a decade, retired around mid-1959. Under his leadership, the College had made appreciable growth in staff and students population and had multiplied in resources. Spiritually, the College had made unquantifiable impact on the lives of both staff and students. The principal was an ordained minister, as well as Rev. Ronald Howarth, who was chaplain. In the area of spirituality, many lives of both staff and students were impacted. Some of them, including staff, were later ordained.

One of the earliest products to be ordained was Seth Oni Fagbemi, a native of Erusu-Akoko. He later proceeded to the University of Ibadan for a degree in the Department of Religious Studies. He was the first student to make a First Class in the annals of the Department. He later became the first Diocesan Bishop of Osun Diocese. Others who followed suit included David Ayo Omojola (later Archdeacon), Albert Aduloju Agbaje, who was the first product of the College to become Archbishop, Sam. Olusola Adesina (later Ven. Dr), to mention just a few.

Following the retirement of Rev. (later Venerable) J.F. Akinrele, the Rev. Ronald Howarth was appointed Acting-Principal. In a short time, life in the College changed in many respects. The students particularly applauded his appointment. Rev. Ronald Howarth was a very pious, prayerful and God-fearing minister. He was ready to make a number of changes by following the pattern of a sister school, Christ School, Ado-Ekiti, which was headed by a whiteman.

Some students used to watch and join Ron. Howarth at his daily 4.00p.m. prayer in the chapel. Ron (as he was fondly called), inspired many in the College in no small measure. In my life, I can say that apart from my parents and brother, Rev.

Howarth was one of those who have inspired me to seek the path of humility and godliness in my ministry.

In the days when graduate-lecturers were very scarce, the few available graduate were made to teach the upper classes. We had Mr. E.O. Olugboja, who taught Geography and History, while Mr. M.A. Popoola later took over History from the former, Ron Howarth taught Literature. In many subjects, we were really in a rush, either because we were behind schedule in some subjects or we would do extra hours of classes in the evening and also do the burning of the midnight oil. There was no electric-generated light, though the college had an old stand-by power generator which was not always working, and which was often put out at 10.00pm, if ever and whenever it worked!

Senior Cambridge Exam – A Bugbear!

The ‘almighty’ examination, otherwise known as ‘Senior Cambridge’ Exam, (so called because it was conducted by the University of Cambridge) was the most frightening exam in our days. It was more so because of the fear of excelling in it.

As an external body conducting exams for countries in West Africa, the University was reputable for her flawless conduct of exams. The policy of ‘fail in English, fail in all’ became a ‘vogue’ that made students fear the exam and relish the study of English Language as priority. What a strange, incapacitating climate of fear and trepidation which overshadowed the final year students six months to the examination! It was as if, if one failed in English, he failed in life. There were cases of students who studied so hard, passed this exam but never did any exams again in life, as they developed inhibitions for further studies or exams.

There was the sad case of a student, Bayo Akinsulure, who was our immediate senior. Bayo was a brilliant student

who prepared very hard for the exam, but due to over-ambition or probably out of anxiety, he overdosed himself with tablets that would enable him to stay awake in order to read extensively. For several days after the exam, it was rumoured that Bayo could not sleep, as a result of which he finally died. The result came three months after; he passed very well but he never lived to see it! This was the only such sad occasion ever recorded in the College.

Our set of final year students apparently learnt a lesson from the above sad story. Many henceforth began to study with zest and caution, reading all day and night, and at times forgetting chapel time or failing to obey light-out orders. The last two categories of defaulting students often faced the wrath of Rev. Ronald Howarth, the Acting-Principal, who would not compromise. He would take the trouble of navigating round the rough campus paths to inspect those who would flout the light-out order at 10pm. Ron did not want students to overwork their brains, how he had wept bitterly and openly on the death of his student a year ago, is still fresh in his memory.

The preparation time from June, through the heat of exams period in November 1959, was for us like an operation period for a battle. Everyone of us put in his full time, best energy and then prepared resolutely to accept the eventual outcome. The end would either be bitterness, regret, disillusionment or sweet success of joy. Our popular song in those days was from a record with the following encouraging and comforting words:

'What will be, will be, – Que sera, sera...'

Some of us (myself included) sang it with relish, though we did not know the writer and the circumstances surrounding its composition!

Recruitment for Employment

With the fear and trepidation preceding the exam (Senior Cambridge Exam!), the labour market shifted its base from one institution to another, looking for prospective employees. We were in the days when employment was awaiting every secondary school leaver. Civil Service envoys came representing different ministries from Ibadan, the Western Regional Headquarters. Employment prospects were so high and alluring, so much that there were opportunities galore in the Ministries of Education, Labour, Industry, Lands and Housing, etc. Everyone who appeared for interview were offered appointment, pending January, 1960. I did not feel inclined to appear for interview by any ministry, and I did not know why.

Sometime later, after series of interviews by various ministries, I told two of my close friends in the class, Michael Elebe (later Michael Orisadahunsi) sitting next to me, and Michael Ojuolape, "I did not do any interview." They were shocked and thought that I was only joking with them.

Despite my ugly experience of years of financial incapability, some, if not most of my contemporaries, expected that I would be most anxious to snatch every opportunity to earn or 'make' money (a common slang). But the ontrary was the case with me! Some were surprised, and termed my negative attitude as that of 'deviant optimism,' or burying one's potential. To be fair to my friends, I too did not quite understand why I was not attracted to any monetary offer. Even though I did not quite understand, I felt that a stronger force was working deeply in my life. The only reason that I gave my friends was that, had I attended the interview and failed to honour the offer, I would have robbed a prospective applicant the chance of securing an offer.

I believed that if I took the offer, I would not have the desired satisfaction. Money was one thing, job satisfaction was

another. I recognised my human weakness in failing to explain, convincingly, my feelings at that material time. However, it was not due to feelings of inferiority at all, nor was it due to low self-esteem.

The Scary Examination at Last

November came like a dream, and with it was the frightening examination. Two weeks into the exam, I felt that my life was completely consumed by the faith that God was the pillar behind my educational career in Victory College, Ikare-Akoko. I also realised that He guided, gave the skill, talents, knowledge and ability to manage my affairs, to make the right decisions at the right time and brought people from 'out of the blue' to assist me at every point of need. He sent people I never knew before, to give me love, kindness and generosity. God, the 'Architect' of my life, made me grow by encountering difficulties that I wished He had allowed me to avoid. He permitted and planned things for my good, while the memories of my yester years' heat of struggles to survive financial storms, began to come back to life again. How and why did He bring me to this moment?

As I ruminated and looked back on my life, I realised that the prevailing grace of God surrounded me all the way. I said to myself, "And here I am today among my mates, spared by God to sit for the final examination. Final!"

In my first year, I had no hope of reaching year two. Then in year two, my chances of passing to year three became slimmer. And then I prayed hard to be graced to manage to reach Class Four, if only to leave school with a 'G. Four' with (Govt. Class Four Certificate) either pass or fail.

In our days in school, it was a common feature to find students who could not go beyond Class Four in their career,

either for reasons of ill-health, financial incapability or academic incompetence. Such drop-outs were graced with 'G Four' Certificate, recognised and approved for work by the Government. This also was the overwhelming thought that came to my mind. But like a miracle, I was able to pass to Form Five and later qualified to sit for the Senior Cambridge Exam. I was overwhelmed with elation and gratitude to God.

King David who felt so unworthy of all the blessings, honour and victory God gave him, in conquering all his enemies around him, and raising him from pasturing the flock, to settling him down in his palace as King of all Israel said:

"But who am I, O Sovereign Lord, that You have brought me this far?... Is this Your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign Lord?" (2 Samuel 7:18 and 19).

As I lay on my bed, recollection of fleeting thoughts came to my mind and I saw how, like David, I endured trying times and waited patiently for God to lift me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire. In a similar vein, the writer of Psalm 116 realised how he passed through trouble and sorrow, he called on the name of the Lord who heard and saved him.

"...The Lord heard my cry for mercy.

...I was overcome by trouble and sorrow ...and He saved me. How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me? ...I will fulfil my vows to the Lord..." (Ps. 116:12,14).

This thought with conviction was what made me kneel down by my bed in the night of the second Friday of November, 1959 (with tears of joy running down my cheeks, wetting my

pillow). I made a solemn vow: “God, if You deem me fit, I will be a pastor, (that was how the priest in my home church was addressed) to work in Your vineyard (church) all the days of my life.”

I solemnly made this pledge, not even caring what it entails to be a pastor. That, in short, was how I made a covenant with God to work in His ministry. That also was how I started the adventure of a lifetime, pursuing a greater and deeper knowledge of God. I did not know what it meant to be a pastor, or what it entailed or even how to be one. All that I desired was a way of giving myself up to God in gratitude and appreciation for what He has done, by marking a milestone of my life. This reason for my decision might appear rather spontaneous and unconvincingly thoughtful, but that was the honest truth. It was not as a result of low self-esteem. Rather, it was out of true and sincere conviction and with due sense of responsibility and reverence for God. After taking this decision, it was like an unseen burden was lifted off my head. The decision became binding and it took effect from that moment that it was taken, it is like putting one’s hand on the plough and not looking back. And when a decision is made for God, it is like a covenant, a vow which becomes irrevocable.

‘Yes Lord...’

After taking this major decision of my life, I needed to know the next step to take by seeking spiritual guidance from the anointed.

So, early Saturday morning, I went to Rev. Ron. Howarth, the College Chaplain and acting principal to let him know my decision to be a pastor in the church. He was excited, he could not hide his joy about my decision. He ordered me to meet the Church District Chairman, Revd. Canon A.O. Kolade (later Archdeacon of Lokoja), father of Dr. Christopher Kolade.

My visit to Canon Kolade that afternoon was not without a concise interview. I met him at the front door of his residence at 'Oke-Alabojuto' (Superintendent's Uphill Residence), which used to be the residence of Venerable L.A. Lennon, the Apostle of Christianity in Akokoland. The latter lived there when he was the Chief Overseer of churches in the area.

Rev. Canon Kolade asked, "Yes?" (meaning what are you looking for, or can I help you?)

"I was told to come and see you, sir," I said. "Who"? He asked.

"Rev. Howarth sir," I answered.

"Why?" he enquired further.

"I want to be a pastor," I said affirmatively, assuming he demanded that I be clear of my purpose.

"To be what?" he asked, his eyes surveying me from head to toe and back again to head.

"Pastor Sir," I affirmed it.

"What is your name?" he probed further.

"I am Matthew Owadayo."

"Go, pray and think about it, and come back in two weeks' time," Papa Kolade dismissed me.

Two weeks later, around 11am, I went back to see the Revd. Canon in his office and to assure him of my readiness to be a pastor. He told me to come for a letter on the completion of my exam. His advice was golden. Anyone who would follow Christ must think twice, that is, he must count the cost; he must not be half-hearted, not distracted by worldly attractions, but focused on Jesus Christ, the 'author and perfecter of our faith.'

Before the proposed appointment, I had thought over my 'dream' and I had taken a firm stand and would not renege. When a man is so determined on achieving a purpose, he takes his destiny in his hands. He defies, or more mildly speaking, forgets all the odds that may come his way.

Like the hymn from the Hymns A & M 333:

*Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,
If thou wouldst my disciple be;
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after me.*

This is a hymn based on Luke 9:23 which states:

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Meanwhile the examination was in progress. Some of my mates began to receive appointment letters, it was rumoured that some had offers from two or more ministries at the same time. Such applicants would face the problem of deciding what job offered better pay. They usually considered ones that offered more pay which in any way would be more demanding in return.

End of Exam/End of Year Celebration

With or without hope of employment, everyone of us had a dream. Our dreams, desires and hopes for the future became stronger day by day as we approached the end of our final examination. We drifted from dreams of illusions to those of reality, but the realisation of dreams and our future were in God's hand.

The entire college body, staff and students, friends and relations were engulfed in the spirit and mood of joyous celebration to mark the successful end of the session. For outgoing students, it was the story about dreams, fulfilment and dedication come true, after serious studies of over five years. It was worth celebrating.

Our class was the second set of students to sit for the final examination in Form Five, and the seventh set to be turned out by the college. It was a remarkable feat on the part of the College. Invitees came from all parts of Akokoland and beyond. Three famous and leading musical bands in Nigeria were invited for the end of year party, organized to honour the outgoing students. They were Bobby Benson, Dr. Victor Olaiya and Roy Chicago, who was a native of Ikare. The celebration day was the last day of the exam, the last paper being Additional Mathematics.

When we were coming out of exam hall at 6.00pm, we found out that carnival camps were already in place and invitees were already streaming into college compound from all directions. Everywhere was in festive mood, even though the main event would start around 9pm at night.

Fascinating Glimpse of the Future

By God's grace and mercy, I completed writing the (Senior Cambridge) West African School Certificate Examination with the rest of my classmates, in spite of my painful experiences. Coming back from the exam hall, I went straight to my room, knelt by my bedside and offered gratitude to God for giving me the grace to do the exam, leaving the rest to the wisdom of God. I went for a shower and then returned to bed. I cannot remember if I had dinner. Everyone was surely fatigued as a result of the examination that took us over one month. Many graduands were not too tired to attend the musical carnival. I did not. I had no interest.

First, for a brief moment, the amplified sound of musical instruments, blaring of trumpets, singing, dancing, etc., caused such a big noise that I thought "my eyes had murdered sleep," (in the words of Shakespeare) but after a spell of time, my eyes succumbed to sleep. I fell into a sound sleep that made me

unconscious of the hustle and bustle of the early part of the night's great function. The spontaneous hullabaloo of its climax had gradually died down before it dawned. The night was incredibly short, I however enjoyed the sleep as it was an anxiety-free night.

"Nocturnal dreams," said Pastor David Wong (of Haggai Institute, Singapore) "are plentiful in the Bible, dreams occur in our waking hours as well as in our sleeping hours. One is the reflection of the other we dream about in the night." I had an experience which was similar to what David is saying here.

As I slept that night, God gave me a revelation. In my dream, I saw my results of the exam that I had just finished. It was a 'preview', a most extra-ordinary miracle of divine revelation to me! It was neither an illusion, nor was it a day-dream. It was the reality of a success story that was yet to happen. I recorded it in a notebook; I did not pay much attention, or attach importance to it. I thought it was a mere glimpse but it was more.

Before going on Christmas vacation, I went to collect the apprenticeship letter from the Rev. Canon A.O. Kolade, which he addressed to Rev. Canon J. S. Oloniyo, the Vicar of St. Peter's Church, Oba-Akoko, to whom I would be apprenticed.

On reaching home, I told my mother and brother about my desire to go to Theology College to train as pastor. To my pleasant surprise, none of them raised any objection. Many people who saw me at home before and after Christmas holidays wondered why I had not gone to work at Ibadan, where secondary school leavers often went to work. I took time to explain and convince them about my call. Few informed church members, who knew how church pastors were poorly paid, did not hide their disappointment. Some were however happy that our town would produce the first clergy.

Our Church, vicar, Rev. A. A. Obasoro, who was going on retirement after his nine-years' stay, happily commended me to the entire church for prayers. He was happy that in his tenure, an Ifira indigene was going into the ordained ministry. He saw me as the 'firstfruit of Achaia.' It was a great achievement on his part before his exit.

Victory College – A Reflection

Looking back at Victory College of our days reawakens the memories of people with whom I related and who stood out prominently. Many were students, some lecturers and others were workers. Most of the students were not my mates but contemporaries. Prominent among the contemporaries were Moshood Alebiosu, a final year muslim student in my first year. We were the first to become intimate in our dormitory because, right from the beginning of our togetherness, he showed kindness and helpful tendencies to me.

In Victory College, there was no religious discrimination. All lecturers and students worshipped together every morning in the chapel, Monday through Friday. There were muslim students who attended chapel regularly and fasted in the month of Ramadan. Moshood Alebiosu and my guardian, Babs Alasan, (Al-Hassan) did so.

Philip Olu Kio, the Philips House Prefect (Professor, Forestry); Ayodeji, the college Goalkeeper (popularly called "Tall") and Balogun, the second college goal-keeper and who most probably was the tallest in the college; Prince Akadiri Momoh (later Oba Akadiri Momoh, the Olukare of Ikare) the centre back for the college team popularly called "Crackles," with David Ayo Omojola, alias 'Dazio,' were the two impregnable football backmen. They were celebrated on the pitch.

There were other popular and outstanding students who showed great feats in different endeavours. Modupe was a great mile-runner, known as the college 'miler,' and medalist in track events at the inter-collegiate sports who would be a possible Olympic candidate for today's Nigeria. Alfred Aduloju Agbaje (later Anglican Archbishop, Church of Nigeria) was a popular crowd-puller and college orator and debater.

Other students who were either senior or junior to me left brilliant academic records. Kola Folayan was said to be the first best student of the college, who narrowly missed coming out in Grade One, but later was the first to become Professor at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Some students were also very friendly and close to me. Among them was Salako, a native of Abeokuta, though senior to me, was very loving and remarkably affectionate. I admired Dele Akinseye for his academic brilliance, Jerome Akinbinu for his gentility; they were natives of Ondo, Sunday Aborowa, a native of Ipesi (later a Civil Engr.), Abel Eleyinmi (later a Permanent Secretary in Ondo State) a native of Oyin, John Olubodun from Iju, near Akure, etc., were though junior, but very friendly and close to me.

Apprenticeship Pays

Apprenticeship has been described as a bridge between where one is coming from and where he is going. In other words, it is like coming from the uninformed, near ignorant background, to a future of hope, promise and fulfilment. A time of apprenticeship is like a time of getting quiet study and patiently waiting on God, the bedrock of faith, for guidance and leadership. It is a time of uncommon opportunity to tap from the experience of someone who knows the way and can guide one through the elementary rudiments of a profession.

When we accept God's invitation to come alongside those who are more familiar with the way, He brings us to a situation that brings about changed perspective and direction. He stretches an apprentice who has surrendered himself as a tool in His hands, He leads with different experiences and insights to counsel, correct and guide his steps to his destiny. In the end, he turns out to be more seasoned through his apprenticeship.

On the third Sunday of January, 1960, after the first sermon I ever preached in St. Peter's Church, Ifira (my home church), the congregation prayed for me before I left for Oba-Akoko. It was a solemn commissioning morning service for me. The

Church elders prayed for me; they were full of joy that a son of the church would become a pastor in their lifetime. After this, I proceeded to assume duty as Teacher-Catechist at Oba-Akoko. I was the second to be so apprenticed to Rev. Canon J.S. Oloniyo. The first was Albert Agbaje, also an ex-student of Victory College, Ikare. He had already been admitted to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, before I got to Oba Akoko.

Canon J. S. Oloniyo was the first ordained church worker to minister in Ifira, my hometown, in 1950. He was fresh from Melville Hall, as Deacon, and worked only for one year, before he was transferred to Erusu. Within that one year, he changed the phase of the Church physically and spiritually.

When Canon Oloniyo was transferred from Ifira, there was a strong protest from the Church members who saw his transfer as a deliberate attempt to draw back the progress of the Church. Canon Oloniyo also made an equally remarkable achievement within the short time he spent at St. Thomas' church, Erusu-Akoko, before his transfer to Oba-Akoko.

In St. Peter's Church, Oba-Akoko, Canon Oloniyo rekindled the spiritual life of the church, maintained very strict discipline within the church and in his own family. He did not tolerate laxity among his workers, those living with him and his own children. Among those who lived with him, and on whom he shed influence, was his nephew, Isaac Deola Odeyemi, who passed through Canon Oloniyo's strict discipline and later reaped the fruit of righteousness and academic excellence. Isaac later had a first class and doctorate degrees in Maths, and became founder and Managing Director of the famous 'Debis Computer Company, Ikeja, Lagos. I found my reference to Dr. Isaac 'Deola Odeyemi useful, because I observed that he was one of those whose lives, Canon Oloniyo remarkably impacted characteristically.

This was the nature of a man under whom I first served as Curate for two years, which gave my ministry a solid foundation. Canon Oloniyo instilled the spirit of honesty, God-fearing and hardwork in his workers. I learnt a lot from his powerful preachings and committed selfless service, which made me feel that my apprenticeship to him was a blessing.

Three months after my arrival in Oba-Akoko, (March 1960), the West African School Certificate Examination results were released. As a matter of fact, the exact results which I saw in the dream appeared against my name! This simple incident accentuated and portended more instances of divine revelation in my life. Faith is the ruling principle for interpreting and understanding our daily life happenings. The exactitude of my December 1959 dream-results, with the real one of March 1960, stunned me, and strengthened my faith in God, who reveals deep and hidden things through visions, dreams, prophecies, etc. (Daniel 2:22; Joel 2:28)

Generally, reactions to the results was that of grief. There was not one single Grade 1 recorded. There were about two, or three candidates who were rated in 'Division One' by internal college assessors. Apart from them, many candidates failed, either because they failed in English Language, or because they failed generally. Moreover, no one passed the Additional Maths due to inadequate preparation. We did not cover the prescribed syllabus for it. The result placed about four students in Division Two, a little more than ten, including me, were placed in Division Three, while many failed.

My successful result came as God's special grace to me – to prove that one could have hope, happiness and joy in difficulties. God, who predestined my humble result, made me come out in a humble grade as no one was in Division One, as against what some good fellow rated me in 'The Episcopacy of The Rt. Rev. Matthew Oluremi Owadayo' – my biography

which I did not see before its launch, intended to be a surprise package for me at my retirement.

In the Anglican Hymn Book, No. 315:

*God is working His purpose out, as year
succeeds to year:..*

Stanza 5 states:

*All we can do is nothing worth, unless God
blesses the deed...' (A.C.Ainger 1894).*

What God was telling me in those difficult days was similar to the words of Selwyn Hughes' quotation:

*"What I permit may not make much sense to you
now...but there is a purpose. Trust my love!"
(Every Day with Jesus ,30 March, 2010).*

Dreams and visions are very much alike, God, through both of them, helps to communicate His plans for one's life or for the people or nation. As St. Paul the apostle wrote to the Philippian Christians:

*"For it is God who works in you to will and to act
according to His good purpose." (Phil.2:13).*

God works through everyone who opens his spirit and mind, and uses his talents to do what God puts on his heart. The moment one says, ' Yes,' to God, he has surrendered himself to God and He takes over and supplies the necessary power to perform His will by continuing the rest of his life journey with Him. He told Prophet Jeremiah:

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you an unsearchable thing you do not know.” (Jer.33:3).

And God revealed to him:

“the plan of good and not of evil, of prosperity, of hope and a future...Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you...I will be found by you.” (Jer. 29:11-14).

The only plan that can give us lasting satisfaction, is the plan from God.

Priest's Self-Denial

One instance I will ever remember was the act of self-denial, demonstrated by my Vicar, Canon J.S. Oloniyo. It happened when the roof of a block of classrooms in the Church-school was ripped off by a tornado which occurred in May 1961. The church needed money to re-roof it immediately. Because it happened at a time that church finances were at a low ebb, Canon Oloniyo readily allowed payment of his stipends to be delayed for some months in order for the church to have money for the rehabilitation of the building.

By this singular act of sacrifice, the church-school children and the entire community were inspired and appreciative of the Vicar's ministry. I counted myself lucky to work under such a loving and dedicated man of God.

A Temporary Set-back

At the end of my first year as an apprentice, I attended the District Church interview, but I was not allowed to proceed to the college with the next set of students. My boss asked me to wait for another year. I felt very bad and decided to withdraw

in annoyance, because I had made up my mind that I would take to another vocation if I was not considered for admission to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, that year.

While I was ruminating seriously on changing my mind about going into the ministry, God sent an elderly man, Mr. Michael A. Kolawole, an Ifira indigene, who was teaching in Oba-Akoko, to appeal and dissuade me when he heard about it. He reminded me of the oath and vow I had made before God and my home church congregation.

Another man, who played the role of a mentor in my life was Mr. R.O. Adesugba, a lover of education. Mr. Adesugba inspired people who worked with him to be hard-working to reach the height of their profession. He warned me never to renege. Heeding the advice of the elders, I stayed, only to find my second year as an apprentice very interesting and challenging.

The services required of my apprenticeship gave me an insight into the rudiment of my future ministerial profession. I prepared adult candidates for baptism and confirmation, taking them through the catechism, thereby deepening my knowledge of the doctrines and pillars of the church's faith.

In my second year as an apprentice, I began to learn and understand that a simple lifestyle that a would-be minister needs, is more of internal than external expression. The Articles of faith for example, when it is interpreted and explained within the biblical perspective, can help the apprentice to cultivate the spiritual ingredients for seasoned leadership.

For a start, a would-be minister needs the discipline of the external in order to be well equipped to cultivate the internal. By the end of my second year of apprenticeship, I had matured enough to hold fort for my Vicar by independently conducting services and preaching, whenever he was on pastoral visit to out-stations. This made me realize

why God delayed my admission as I was maturing mentally, spiritually and intellectually too.

Church ministry is a life-long ministry, which, therefore, calls for solid and serious preparation – solid foundation and determined pursuit. Many great men of history started their humble ministry under the tutelage of experienced teachers. Jesus Christ taught his disciples that a servant must first learn under his master before he can become a master. The Bible is full of examples of servants of God who learnt under masters. Joshua was under Moses, Samuel under Eli, Elisha under Elijah, Timothy under Paul, and so on.

A Grouse Against My Ministerial Ambition

1 954 was a memorable year in the Old Western Region of Nigeria. There was the preparation for the Free Primary Education, planned to start in the region in 1955. Part of the preparation was to arrange common passing out primary school leaving examination for Standards Five and Six. Occasional classes, social and outdoor activities, were arranged between the two classes too.

In the spirit of the above inter-class relationship, we had teams of tennis playmates that often competed at break-time. Our Std Six team included leading players like Samson 'Tosin Adejori, my bosom friend and myself and a few interested boys, while girls in Std Five included Sussana Kokumo, Josephine Egun Oladugba, Grace Oyebola, Esther, Margaret, among others. Tosin and myself formed a strong team that could not be defeated by the girls, no matter how hard they played.

We were very playful and friendly, in the sense that David Wong in his book, *'Journey Mercies'* called 'platonic friendship' with no romantic love intentions. We both had thoughts, admiration and cared for one another without any sexual urge or desire. We were all relatively young and surely under

marriage-age. Some, if not all of us, however nursed the hope of furthering our education beyond primary school. The lives and words of our teachers, especially Messrs J.O. Omogbeja, the HM and E.E. David, were very challenging to us. At the end of the year, we parted company. Then a period of separation of about seven years followed when some of us met casually only once or twice.

She was very brilliant at school and prospective too. She wrote to inform me that she had spent three years in Secondary Modern School and two years in Teacher Training College and so was ready for marriage (I guess, even though she did not expressly state this latter part). I wrote to congratulate her and wish her more success. I thought it would impress her when I wrote to tell her that I too had finished my secondary education and that I would be proceeding to the Seminary in January 1962. Assuming that this lady was interested in marrying me, would she not have been more discreet to disclose her mind to me even if she did not like my intended ministerial ambition.

Sometime later, I was shocked to receive a six-page letter from this old playmate who probably thought that I was a possible suitor and looked forward to marrying me. She could not conceal her resentment and disappointments, and so resorted to writing, calling me names, using derogatory remarks in her voluminous letter. She wondered why I did not go to work in Lagos or Ibadan like my former classmates. She opined that if I were civilized, I would take to a lucrative occupation in a Bank, Civil Service, private firms, Kingsway, etc. Nothing could be more embarrassing! So I had to pay for my lack of civilization by being sent a stinker, even though I had never proposed to her, or written her any letter to that effect. Then I began to wonder, how many people suffer for the offence they know nothing about! At a time when I was so passionate about my desire for the church ministry, nothing, not even the love of

a disappointed girlfriend, could deter me from my goal. While she decided to write me a stinker, I decided to regard it as a good riddance and also as the will of God!

Later I began to wonder why this lady loved to marry me, but hated the work I chose to do. I later learnt that the reason for her hatred for church-work was as a result of the experience she had when she lived with a close relative of hers who married a short-course catechist, but the couple did not live happily. She got upset with the situation, left them, and hissed never to live in a vicarage again.

Although, this lady and I did not get married, I kept thinking over her case for years. She believed I had the qualification to work in a reputable establishments, and earn good salary, but opted for church work. Can we imagine the number of women who get married to their husband because of their job and money. She forgot that no two marriages are exactly the same, even though, all marriages have direct or indirect influence on people who live with or around us.

Any flaw in the divine institution of marriage therefore, is often attributed to and regarded as satanic manipulations. Satan is commonly held responsible for the strongest attacks on Christian marriages. Hence couples are warned against allowing satan to have a chance to deceive them. It is his intention usually to make the leaders of the faith, and most especially ministers or preachers, his targets and thereby to make a spectacular ridicule of the very values that they cherish. In his onslaught, no category of believers is exempted. Satan tries to ridicule ministers by rendering their ministries ineffective. In some cases, he causes their children to be disobedient to their parents and God. In many cases, material things like money, cloths, or other worldly attractions form the common cause of divorce.

Hurdles before Immanuel College Admission

Customarily, candidates seeking admission to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, in the past had three interview hurdles to jump. The first was district, second diocesan and the third was college interview.

The district interview was presided over by Canon A.O. Kolade. Three of us: Samuel Segun Obasoro, Joshua Adedayo Bowaje and myself, all of us ex-students and mates in our alma mater Victory College, Ikare, attended the interview. Samuel Segun Obasoro and Joshua Bowaje were apprenticed to Canon Z. S. Olukoju, the Vicar, of St. John's Church, Oka-Akoko and Canon M. O. Obadofin, Vicar St Paul's Arigidi, respectively. Segun later changed his mind and withdrew, while Joshua and I proceeded to Diocesan interview at Akure, presided over by Bishop D.O. Awosika, flanked by Provost T.O. Olufosoye, Ven. I.O.S. Okusanya, Canon D.I. Okunfulure, Canon A.O. Kolade, etc. At this interview, my friend, J.O. Bowaje, was dropped, because he was not yet confirmed.

Immanuel College interview was more tedious, comprehensive and decisive; it involved written and oral sessions, lasting for four days. A few months later, results were sent through Bishops to the Church District Chairmen who delivered them on their behalf. Prospective candidates had three to four months to prepare. My Vicar, Canon J.S. Oloniyo and the entire St Peter's Church, Oba-Akoko, happily sent me off to College in January 1962.

Immanuel College (of Fame) – At Last!

Ibadan, the imposing and immense ancient city, (like a cocoon) ‘sheltered’ Immanuel College of Theology from mundane attractions, for decades, and remotely confined her to the most ancient and secluded outskirts of Kudeti. Ibadan and Immanuel College were synonymous as Oyo and St. Andrew’s College were in the past, until the middle of last century. For instance, if someone – a church worker or church school teacher, was said to have gone to Ibadan or Oyo, he would be understood to have gone to Melville Hall or later Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, or to St Andrew’s College, Oyo. That was the general belief of people before University College, Ibadan, superciliously gained prominence. And when Immanuel College was moved to Samonda, close to the University of Ibadan, it came from ‘confinement’ to limelight; to exposure.

Immanuel College of Theology is the union seminary, co-sponsored by two giant denominations - the Methodist and the Anglican. She is the premier union seminary in Nigeria. Kudeti itself has come into limelight by the presence and work of the early missionaries and the habitable location of the Theological Institution saddled with the training of manpower for the two sponsors.

Even though the College site provided the solitary, ascetic type of life, the rough, rocky roads leading to the place, were believed to have some historical significance. The isolated staff quarters provided suitably quiet atmosphere for all of them who were ninety-nine percent expatriate at the time of my admission. Their presence away from the hustle and bustle of the rough ancient city life, and the unique pattern of college religious ceremonies formed grotesque monuments of the monastery of our colonial heritage. This feature most probably contributed to why the college attracted fame and fascinated scholars internationally. The site attracted eminent scholars who

were dedicated and who sought to make contributions to theological education and disseminate knowledge to enrich church life.

Inside the College

There were about five scattered hostels of various structures to accommodate students. They included one long cement-plastered storey block for Years Two and Three students, two small bungalows to accommodate three or four students in each room. Two long wooden pre-fabricated shed-like dormitories to house first year students. The latter were heat and cold conductors at day and night times alternately. What an unspeakable privilege to be allowed by God to live in such a condition, whereby life administers awful hardship at times to prepare us for future eventualities!

I shared a pre-fab room with two elderly roommates—J.O. Oyeleye and E.A. Oyatoye, who bought large hand raffia fans to cushion the effect of the heat. Later, after leaving college, Rev J.O. Oyeleye was sent to Bassa-Komu as missionary in 1965. I was posted to a very remote village (outskirt of Ondo), living in a vicarage (with little or no ventilation) in which old church workers lived in 1920s.

Seminary Life

The student population was strictly limited to the available accommodation. My class was the biggest, with a population of 32 students and I was the smallest and youngest in the class, and in the entire college. As a matter of fact, some of my classmates were old enough to be my father. Some used to tease me thus, “Small boy, why are you here? Boys of your age are in Teachers’ College, HSC (Higher School Certificate School) or in the University,” etc. Timothy Ipadeola Bolaji (later Bishop of

Yewa Diocese) was in the practice of calling me '*Omo-e-kere*,' (meaning small boy).

Such taunting remarks made me doubt at times if that was the right place for me. I was not totally free from this sense of guilt until my second year when Peter Karau, (younger) was admitted among the next set of students. He was the youngest, though of the same height with me. Peter came from the Army School, and on the completion of his Immanuel College Seminary course, he entered the Nigerian Army Chaplaincy where he later became a Major. I later met Rev. Major Peter Karau in Jos.

Elected Students' Union Secretary

Before the end of my first year, the student body elected me as Secretary which I did not contest for; I protested but to no avail. I suspected 'conspiracy' on the part of some of my friends who thought that I was too critical and outspoken at Students' Assembly or Dining Table. They thought that there must be a way of silencing me. If I did not perform, then I could be criticised, if not ridiculed. But I think God used it to equip me more.

The first duty I had to perform was like a test by the order of the Students' Assembly. I was to write a letter inviting Ven. E.O. Idowu of Ilesha Archdeaconry, (later Bishop) a former lecturer, to preach at the college anniversary service. I addressed the letter thus: 'Rev. E.O. Idowu' instead of 'Ven. E.O. Idowu' and had it posted to Ilesha. The addressee (a very thoughtful disciplinarian) returned the letter as it was addressed to him, with the comment: "Learn to address." Then I got the first knock! But that mistake taught me how to properly address different categories of clergy of the Anglican Denomination.

The office of Students' Union Secretary also made me relate intimately with junior and senior students, as well as lecturers in the College. I was made to relate on behalf of the College with sister institutions like Ibadan Grammar School, United Missionary College (UMC), especially in connection with inter-house sports, seminars, anniversary celebrations arrangements, etc. The office taught and launched me into leadership and teamwork stance.

Indigenization of College Staff

By the middle of my first year in 1962, a young, dashing, brilliant scholar, who was a fresh graduate from King's College, London, came to join the staff. He was Rev. Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye (B.D. London). His arrival opened the gateway to the staff indigenization policy of the College. Soon after, the gradual withdrawal of both Anglican and Methodist staff members followed in succession. First, the principal Canon David Anderson left, then came his replacement by the Very Rev. E.A.A. Adegbola, then Revds Todd, Simonson, Drummond, Barraclogh, etc., followed.

Before the Very Rev. Adegbola came, Rev. J. Adetiloye was the only Nigerian member of staff. He soon impacted and changed the social life of the College. His social influence soon transcended the confine of the college by participating in public debates, symposia and seminars, on issues that could help to cultivate values of honesty in church and community. He demonstrated intellectual capacity that inspired and challenged many of us in our academic pursuit and achievement. Rev. Abiodun Adetiloye later became the Vice-Principal of the College. He used his brilliance to attract students to his History and Hebrew lectures and also enlist the interest of the students. Rev Adetiloye soon became a 'marketable bride,' chased by church and institutions of higher learning.

Change in Headship

The College witnessed a change in leadership when the principal, Canon David Anderson, left finally to head a sister Theological College, Wyclif Hall, Oxford, England, at the end of that year. He was fondly called 'Baba' or 'Father Anderson' because of his fatherly affection and love, which he showed by his committed service to the college. Canon Anderson's regime led the college to a pedestal of high attainment which brought international respect and recognition to the college. His administration was that of the ideal and the reality which endeared him to the hearts of both the trustees of the college, staff and students.

Papa Anderson had zero tolerance for academic laziness, and thus, he recruited and encouraged young secondary school leavers who could work hard at the GCE A/L, for admission to University for higher education. His vision and efforts produced the Fagbemis', the Olowokures', the Ladigbolus', the Obabas', the Agbajes', the Adesinas', the Fabulujes', the Omoyajowos', etc, some of who later became Archbishops, Bishops, University Professors, etc., in both Methodist and Anglican Churches in Nigeria.

Canon Anderson was replaced by the first African principal, the Very Rev. Dr. (later Bishop) E. Adeolu Adegbola, B.D, a Methodist minister who had earlier headed the Methodist Training Institute, Sagamu. He was a world-traveled theologian, who enhanced the image of the college socially and educationally. He too, a lover of education, was very enterprising. His regime witnessed a full implementation of the indigenisation policy, staff-wise.

With the arrival of Rev. (later Bishop) Gideon Ola Olajide B.D. from the same London Divinity School with Rev. J.A. Adetiloye, the Principal's hand was strengthened to carry out more effectively his administrative policy. He had earlier

attempted to affiliate the College to University of London for the B.D. programme. The plan to experiment with four of us in our time failed. The ambitious vision of Very Rev Adegbola and Staff yielded fruit when S.A. Adewale and S.O.Olowoyo (later bishops) gained admission to University of Ibadan and were allowed to do their studies by special arrangement, concurrently with their ordination course.

Health Challenges

A health problem became part of my searing experience in the college. I had a foretaste of the portent in the first half of my first year when gradually I was having difficulty with my right hand. I could not understand, but I was made to believe that it could be due to spiritual attack. It became more serious in my second year when I was preparing for Part One of the University of London Diploma in Theology (Dip.Th.) examinations.

I was referred to both public and private hospitals in Ibadan, which included Adeoyo State Hospital, the U.C.H., Oruwariye Hospital, Oke-Ado, among others, and I did all prescribed tests and x-rays, but no diagnosis indicated the cause. At last, some experienced elders attributed it to “writer’s cramp of the hand,” caused by uncontrollable hardening of the muscles of the hand which rendered the hand incapable of free and easy writing. I wondered why I did not experience this so called ‘cramp of the hand’ when I wrote the 1959 WAEC (the then Senior Cambridge Exam) and the GCE A/L papers in January 1962 before coming to resume in the College. Why did I not experience this during any of the above named exams?

This situation made me to be desperate. I asked myself all sorts of questions as I was really confused. “Where else would I go? What else do I do?” I had faced financial ordeal in my secondary school days from which it has pleased God to save me. Would this jeopardise my chances of reaching the goal of my life ambition?

The real trauma took place more seriously in my second year. I managed to write the Part 1 University of London Diploma Examination in June 1963 at the Obisesan Hall Centre, Ibadan. I could only scribble down few points which required pages of answer paper sheets. While I was sobbing in the exam hall, J. Olu. Kayode (later Very Rev. Dr.) sitting next to me, who was writing Diploma II paper, sympathetically calmed me. I guessed my sobbing loudly upset him.

It was the same experience that I had when writing College Worship Exam paper, examined by Rev. G. I. O. Olajide. But for him, I would have walked out of the exam hall, frustrated. This time, I was tempted to think that God did not want me to come to this college. Why do I come to ridicule myself here again? Must I face mockery here again as I did in Victory College? How could the enemy put obstacles on my way again to stop me from running my course and achieving my goals? Some of my fellow seminarians formed 'Prayer Warriors' Group,' they fasted and prayed with me. Practically, fasting and prayers seemed not to assuage my difficulties. One of them, J.A. Taiwo (Methodist), a native of Omu-Aran, who was very fatherly consoled me. He used to address me: '*Remi, Omo mi*' (meaning, 'Remi, my child', actually, he was old enough to be my father). As an experienced elderly student, he would counsel me by narrating the past sad events of his life.

As I was walking out of the exam hall, Rev Olajide beckoned to me. I was surprised when he started to advise and encourage me not to give up, but to persevere. He spoke so gently and soothingly as if he had known all I was planning to do when he was invigilating the college examination.

That evening, at mid-week Holy Communion Service, Rev Simonson preached on a text that touched me to the marrow:

"Be strong and courageous and do the work.

Do not be afraid or discouraged,

For the Lord God, my God is with you.

He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work ...of the Lord is finished."

(1 Chronicles 28:20)

What an encouragement and assurance this message brought to my dreary mind. It was most soul-lifting to know and be reminded that God was with me, in the midst of my frustrating difficulties and temptations. I claimed the relevance of the message to my life as being the most appropriate and appealing.

With all the attempts made, which were to no avail, my understanding of St. Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' which God did not remove despite his passionate plea, became deepened. God was with him in the suffering and thus He made His power perfect in St. Paul's weakness (2 Cor.12:9).

No one knows exactly what Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was. It could be a painful ailment that constituted an impediment in the course of his ministry, in spite of it all, he pushed on, he did not surrender. In a similar vein, I do not know what caused the cramp, a challenge, an obstacle, which did not appear when I was writing the School Certificate Exam, or even during the GCE.

One thing, a writer said, is to remember that, even though God did not deliver Paul from the 'thorn in the flesh', He was certainly there with him in it... He always gave Paul enough grace to carry on.

Selwyn, another writer of the spiritual said:

"...God does miracles in answer to prayer, but at times He chooses to let us pass through something so that He can use it in our lives to deepen our understanding and enrich our ministry to others."

(Every Day with Jesus April 28, 2010).

It was an irony in the life of St Paul that God foretold Ananias that He would show Paul how much he would suffer for His name (Acts 9:16), so, in addition to 'the thorn in his flesh', God allowed him to be in prison frequently, to be flogged severely, and exposed to death repeatedly (2 Cor. 11:23); thus he could write to his son in God:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness..."

(2 Tim. 4:7-8).

In such circumstances, God made me pass through the 'valley of the shadow of death', and another surprise, I was among the four who passed the Diploma Part 1. This probably informed the academic staff's decision to get us enrolled for London Diploma II and to experiment with us for the B.D. course. The joy of passing the Part One Diploma was very short-lived. The interval between Parts One and Two was one long year of hell for me! Only God knows what aggravated the 'cramp' condition. To write Diploma Two exam papers became totally impossible. I managed to scribble answers to one or two questions out of five, in one and a half hours – no way! No miracle could do that.

At the end of the exam, I knew that I had failed without waiting to be told. I did not need to wait for the result because I managed to answer two questions out of five and I could not even read my illegible answer. I knew that no miracle could make me pass the exam. My failure to pass Diploma Two meant that God had blocked my chances of doing the London BD. The College thus discarded the London University affiliation programme.

Adetiloye-Olajide: Catalysts for Change

The generation of students who sat under the feet of Revds. Adetiloye and Olajide for tutelage at Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, would affirm that they left a trail for all students to follow. They started their ministry from the grassroot level, often referred to as the 'scratch' and by dint of hardwork and as optimists, followed up their 'dreams of possibility' which led them to the zenith of their ministry. Both Revds J.A. Adetiloye and G. I. Olajide rose from the lowest (Catechist) to the highest (Bishop) echelon of the Church ministry.

They came back to Nigeria with B.D. Degrees from the University of London, in an age when graduate clergy were very scarce, not only in the church, but all over the country. They, like all other degree-holders, were hotly sought for, but refused to be lured by the prospect in secular establishments like academia or Civil Service.

The presence of Revds Adetiloye and Olajide in Immanuel College supported and strengthened the administration of the first African principal, Very Rev E.A.A.Adegbola, to make a debut with the moving of the College close to University of Ibadan (U.I.), and its eventual affiliation. The staff members reproduced themselves in the generation of students they thought. To the glory of God, many of their products later

became Bishops, Archbishops, University Professors, etc. Mention would later be made later of these faithful servants of God who impacted our lives intellectually and spiritually among others.

The college academic staff, under the headship of the principal mooted an idea to experiment with four students who were to be attached to the University of London for the external degree of Bachelor of Divinity programme. The prospective students for the experiment were T.I. Bolaji (later Bishop), J.A. Taiwo (Methodist), Noel Amadi and myself. Even though the plan failed to materialise, the intention however showed how visionary and dedicated the staff were, and their unanimous decision to cultivate the culture of sound leadership for the future of the Church. As stated above, God blocked the way to B.D. London for me in His own wisdom.

Immanuel College – University Affiliation

In June 1964, the trustees of the college and the staff made another landmark in the history of the institution by the turning of the first sod in the new site at Samonda near the University, and changing the academic year to correspond with that of the University (U.I). The college actually moved to the new site in September 1964. Consequently, our final year class was made to end our course in June that year which gave us an advantage of being ordained six months earlier than we planned. We however led the rest to the turning of the first sod ceremony at Samonda, but we never reached the new site as students.

Back To Sender

A fortnight to vacation, locations of final year students took place. Because four of us were initially earmarked for the London B.D. programme experiment, we were not eventually located along with others. But a few days before vacation, we were informed that the proposed B.D. experiment was put in abeyance! I guessed that God informed the academic staff to do so.

With the sudden change, other three affected students were quickly located by their Bishops, while I was floating. On the eve of vacating the College, I went to report to the principal, Very Revd. Adegbola, who told me to phone the Bishop of the Diocese from where I was admitted. I didn't know the number and I told him after fiddling with it for about fifteen minutes that it was not through.

"Hello", the principal blurted out, "if you don't know what to do or where to go, go to the Bishop who sent you here." With that, I left for dinner.

Something happened again which later stunned not only me, but also my late friend –Dayo Bowaje, who ran to meet me before I entered the dining hall where students gathered for dinner. He asked about my location. In order to satisfy his curiosity, I told him in a light-mood:

"To Victory College, our Alma Mater."

"As what?" he inquisitively asked.

"As Chaplain...*Mo nsere ni o, mi o serious o.*"

On hearing Victory College, he jumped in excitement and ran away.

'Dayo, Dayo, Dayo!' I called, but all my efforts to call Dayo back to tell him that I said it in a light mood failed; I was only

joking. He only heard the part – ‘As Chaplain,’ worse still, he did not keep it to himself but being the Students’ Body Secretary, he announced it to the assembly.

As soon as I entered in the hall, I was inundated with greetings of “Owadayo, congratulations! Congratulations Owadayo.” Despite my efforts to debunk the news, the students kept congratulating me and so, I started to say, “Thanks everybody, thank you.”

Ordination Retreat

The following day, I left for Ondo to join my fellow ordinands who were already at the Bishops court for the retreat which was led by Canon (later Venerable) J.A. Iluyomade. On Sunday July 12, 1964, in the Cathedral of St. Stephen, Oke-Aluko, Ondo, the Rt. Rev. I.O.S. Okusanya, Bishop of Ondo, did his maiden ordination, whereby he admitted us into the Diaconate. I was appointed Gospeller; the first to be ordained. Others who were ordained Deacons were J.O. Fagoroye, J.O. Oyeleye, C.C.F. Itamakinde, M.A. Ogunro, J.O. Oyekusibe, among others, at the same service; the Rev. J.A. Omoyajowo (later Prof. Bishop) was priested.

The occasion of my ordination brought great joy to my brother, Z.A. Owadayo, who was accompanied by his best friend, Mr. (later Chief) L.O. Oyegoke. They came all the way from Ifira-Akoko to witness the occasion. My sister, Comfort Omolemi and her husband, who were based in Ondo attended the service. For my brother, it was an ambition accomplished, which God granted him grace to witness in his lifetime.

Location

After the service, I went to see the Bishop for my location. He told me to report the following morning, and before breakfast, I was at his door. The Bishop ordered the driver to put my

luggage in the boot. We drove out of Ondo City, passed through Akure and Owo, and we headed for Ikare. And straight he drove to Victory College, Ikare. He stopped at the Principal's office and introduced me to the principal as the Chaplain for the College!

I could not understand what was happening. Could anything be more surprising to me in life! I began to wonder how a 'prophetic joke', could become a true prophecy fulfilled. I was too stunned to tell anybody. When Dayo, my friend, came to meet me in Ikare, his hometown, it took me a long time to convince him that I never had an inkling of my location that night that I went to make 'fake-telephone call.'

I did not know that Bishop I.O.S. Okusanya, being the Chairman, was in Ikare, mainly to preside over the Board of Governors' Meeting of the College. The Bishop himself did not know what had transpired between me, Dayo and the College before ordination. A friend of mine, a teacher-colleague, before I went to Seminary, used to talk of 'holy lie.' I guess that if he had heard about it, he would call mine 'holy prophetic lie!' I saw that God had used the Bishop to fulfil my dream before he went back to Ondo thereafter.

Tumultuous Welcome and Thanksgiving Service

Following my July 12, 1964 Ordination, His Royal Majesty, the Olufira of Ifira, Oba Joseph A. Adesunloye, called on St. Peter's Church, Ifira, (my home-church) congregation and the entire Ifira community, to get prepared to accord my arrival home, a rousing welcome. To this effect, a taxi cab was procured to convey me from Ikare to Ifira. On Saturday 18th July, a mammoth crowd of colourfully dressed men, women and school children lined up the road from Shosan-Oke to Ifira, a distance

of more than five kilometres, to welcome me. The five kilometre-walk took about two hours, because it was accompanied with drumming and dancing. Hunters were dotted at strategic spots booming their guns in relay form. The Olufira, with his traditional chiefs, was waiting to welcome me at his palace. The joy of the Oba personally knew no bounds.

At Ipiran, my own Quarters men and women, boys and girls and all the elders were at Opon's (Chief Job Owamara, the oldest and head of the Caucus of Elders) court-yard, assembled to welcome me in the customary way of welcoming an august visitor. I did not know that such honour could ever be arranged for a clergyman of my little category! But the honour was not mine, but God's, for He was vindicated for His faithfulness.

Saturday 18th July, 1964, was a never-to-be-forgotten day in my life and a milestone in the history of Ifira, when they trooped out to welcome their first son to be ordained. The tumultuous welcome given by the whole people of Ifira, irrespective of their religious affiliations, was unprecedented in the annals of the town. No casual visitor to the town would be in doubt that all the townspeople were in festive mood, and in ready preparation for the next day thanksgiving.

The following day, Sunday 19th, was scheduled for general thanksgiving service in the Church. The occasion witnessed added grandeur by the presence of my former Vicar, the Rev. Canon J.S. Oloniyo, who preached a very inspiring and historic sermon. The church members who knew him as the first Parson of the church thirteen years back were too excited to welcome him.

Launched into Full-time Parish Ministry

The fulfilment of my dream as Victory College Chaplain was short-lived. Before the end of the year 1964, St. Luke's Church, Okeigbo, was said to be vacant. Another Church, St. Luke's Aigo-Ile Oluji also had no worker. With such pressing need for workers within the then Ondo Archdeaconry, the Very Rev T.O. Olufosoye, appealed urgently to the Diocesan Bishop for workers.

I was transferred to assist Canon M.A. Olupona, the Vicar of St. Peter's, Ile-Oluji, while Rev. J.O. Oyeleye, an elderly priest, was sent to St Luke's Church, Okeigbo and Rev. S.F. Adepetu was put in charge of St. Luke's, Aigo-Ile-Oluji.

I counted myself lucky to be sent to serve as Curate to Canon Olupona, from whom I gained a lot of experience. Rev. Canon Olupona was an experienced, enlightened, and humorous parish priest whose members hardly afforded to miss his Sunday sermons. He was greatly missed when he was away on a year parish-attachment in England. One other virtue that endeared him much to his parishioners was his decent speech and neat appearance. Having trained as a teacher,

Canon Olupona was professionally good at training junior clergy apprenticed to him. In no time after my priesthood ordination, Canon Olupona gave me the opportunity to preach and celebrate the Holy Eucharist impromptu as a result of which I had to be prepared always. It was in the spirit of this challenge that I conducted the children's baptism at the Juvenile harvest of October 1964, to the admiration of the congregation.

Ile-Oluji: An Enviale Church

One enviable quality of the life of St. Peter's Church, Ile-Oluji was the spirit of dedication, commitment and generosity which was characteristic of the members at home and abroad. St. Peter's church, Ile-Oluji was one of the churches where God made me work. I observed with appreciation the attitude of selflessness and healthy rivalry of the members. Members gave generously to support the church in cash and kind. Among those who demonstrated this spirit of selfless service were Chief Odofoin Adekeye, whose mother was installed Iya Ijo of the Church by the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt.Rev. I.O.S. Okusanya, on Saturday 24 December, 1966. Chief Adekeye was a very respected High Chief and a committed Christian. He single-handedly built a vicarage for the Church. Also, Chief Henry Fajemirokun too single-handedly did the refurbishment of all the church pews and the renovation (painting) of the church. He proudly did this in 1966, in the sweet memory of his late father whom he said was the carpenter who made the pews.

Years after I had left Ile-Oluji, this enviable spirit of selfless and voluntary service in the church continued. The children of late Venerable D.I. Okunfulure, the erstwhile Archdeacon of Akure (and renowned Baba-Ijo of the Church) built an ultra-modern Church in memory of their father. Also, Rt. Rev. Amos Fagbamiye, an indigene based in America, released his house (free of charge) to the Diocese of Ile-Oluji to accommodate

the Diocesan Bishop pending the building of the Bishop's-court.

One of the things that I appreciated much and still do, in Ondo and Ile-Oluji church members, was love, the power that easily overcomes every human barrier. Any non-indigene church-worker who worked either in Ondo or Ile-Oluji when I was there, would find it inspiring and much helpful later to use varied experiences acquired, for administrative purposes.

Marital Life

I first met a young lady in a very unobtrusive manner who unknown to me was going to affect my life beyond imagination. She was Eunice Olufunmilayo Ademuyiwa, of the popular Ademuyiwa family, from Ipesi-Akoko.

Little Eunice was born into a notable Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C.) family. Her father, Moses Ademuyiwa and mother, Marian Ademuyiwa were married statutorily in St. John's Anglican Church, Ipesi. Pa Moses Ademuyiwa (as he was respectfully and fondly addressed, because he refused to be called Chief) and his wife, were formerly lay-reader and women's leader respectively in St. John's Anglican Church, Ipesi, before they were converted to Joseph Ayo Babalola-led Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) faith in which they strictly brought up their children.

When the new evangelistic movement by Joseph Ayo Babalola raged in the 1930's, Mr. and Mrs. Ademuyiwa were among those who drifted to the new movement, which metamorphosed to the Christ Apostolic Church. The couple were already in the C.A.C before Eunice was born, as the second to the last in the family of five. Other children by her mother included, Mesdames Comfort Oluwakemi Adejube, Felicia Afere wife of Mr S.T. Afere of Okeruwa-Ikare, Hannah Dare,

wife of Chief A.I. Dare of Oka-Akoko and Pastor Vincent Taiye Ademuyiwa.

For drifting away to the C.A.C., Mr. Ademuyiwa suffered persecution which only strengthened him in the faith. He later confessed that he left the Anglican Church because of the fear of being forced to join the ogboni fraternity which was in vogue then. He and his co-drifters felt this was against their belief and so stubbornly refused to yield to consequent persecution and dissuasion attempts.

Eunice and I first met in our childhood days at the United Primary School, Ifira-Ipesi, between 1950 – 1952. Later in 1961, I met her again during my apprenticeship at Oba-Akoko. When I gained admission to Immanuel College, Ibadan, I visited her a number of times.

We began courtship. Her father was reluctant to support our marriage, fearing that as an Anglican church pastor I might be a member of the dreadful secret society. He was however relieved when he was assured that as a clergy, I was under oath, never to join any such society.

On August 31, 1965, we exchanged vows at St. Peter's Anglican Church, Ifira. Her father, Pa Moses Ademuyiwa, gladly handed her hand over to me in marriage, through the hand of Rev. Canon J.A. Ade Ajayi, the Chairman of Akoko District Church Council and successor to Canon A.O. Kolade. Mr. Dayo Bowaje, an ordinand and an old mate of mine and Miss Bola Ojo, a school mistress and an old mate of my bride were our best man and chief-bridesmaid respectively. The Rev. Canon (later Bishop) Joseph O. Arulefela preached our wedding sermon.

My wife and I regard life as a gift from God as well as a journey. This is what we see marriage to mean, a gift from God to multiply and spread among people through the grace of God.

One area which has given us immense joy, is the ministry to which it has pleased God to call us into. We are both from humble families, rich in values of honesty, decency and humility, with the fear and love of God. We have shared together, the grace of a ministry to assist quarrelling couples to avoid divorce.

Through sharing, we have experienced joys and sorrows, progress and difficulties, deaths of parents and relationships, neglect, etc. These are features common to human experience and are not intended by God to make our faith flicker, but to mature. God alone knows why He has made us pass through some difficult experiences. Like St. Paul said,

"...God, Father of compassion and comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

(2 Cor. 1:3–4).

God has used and helped us to organise seminars and conferences on parenting, which is the most interesting responsibility we have shared with joy. Parents are strictly counselled to shun divorce at all costs. Even in extremely bad cases, "Moses (only) permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." (Mat. 19:8) The evils of divorce are innumerable, ranging from broken hopes to shattered and ruined expectations, distortion or violation of God's plans, frustrating disappointments, etc.

Indeed, facing the fair and stormy weather of life seems to be the pattern that makes life interesting, exciting and meaningful. Even now that the most of our lives are behind us, we are totally consumed by the faith that God, who gave a mission, a fruitful ministry is still guiding, teaching and giving us the divine ability to make the right decisions.

St. Paul said,

"Therefore, we do not lose heart, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." (2 Cor.4:16).

Everyday, we give praise to God for giving us the faith, the grace and the love which assist God's people to overcome every human barrier.

The event of September 29, 1965, exactly a month after our wedding, when my best friend, Dayo Bowaje and I were coming from Ikare, two days after his ordination thanksgiving service, is hard to forget. We were involved in a motor accident near Owo. I had just warned the cab driver against reckless speeding when suddenly, he narrowly avoided a head-on-collision with an on-coming vehicle on the peak of a hill. He lost control and began to somersault. Consciously or otherwise, three times I called: 'JESUS! JESUS!! JESUS!!!

True to that name, wonderful enough, He answered by coming to our rescue. It was a beyond my understanding how I came out of the vehicle. This incident strengthened my confidence in the veracity of God's promise in Psalm 50 verses 14 and 15: "...Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me." The Lord our God is a saving God in the way He manifests Himself to those who trust Him and remember to call upon Him in the time of crisis. In the Book of Joel 2:32, it is stated: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Even though the accident did not claim anyone's life, some of us were discharged after one or two days from St. Louis Hospital, Owo. I was discharged after six days. My friend Dayo was worst affected as his spinal cord was damaged! He was for the rest of his life bed-ridden. A young deacon who never reached his station!

Academic Aspiration

At Ile-Oluji, the 'cramp' in my hand persisted. I told my Vicar, Canon M.A. Olupona who reported the case to the Provost, Very Revd. T.O. Olufosoye (later Archbishop). Provost Olufosoye personally took me to see Dr. Akinsete, the Chief Medical Officer in charge of Adeoyo Hospital, Ibadan. A comprehensive test was done, and not a thing was detected. Provost Olufosoye was a very sympathetic and loving Church leader who readily condescended to my low level when I was in dire need of assistance despite the fact that I was not working directly under him. As authoritative, tough and stern as his appearance was to those of us young and up-coming priests, Provost Olufosoye was surprisingly humble, helpful and kind to any needy person or priest. He was very open and down to earth.

The pains in my hand notwithstanding, Ile-Oluji provided me with a rich ground to prepare for the GCE A/L. It was there I met Mr. Sunday Ehindero (later Inspector General of Police) also studying for the GCE A/L. We were both studying together on Saturdays in one of the classrooms of Gboluji Grammar School where he was a tutor. He was also a regular worshipper at St. Peter's Church, Ile-Oluji.

Although I was preparing privately for the repeat of London Dip.Th. Part II Exam, I also registered for the GCE A/L. Mr. Sunday Ehindero and I parted company following my transfer to Odigbo in Jan.1967.

Our Saviour's Church, Odigbo

On December 24th, 1966, the Diocesan Bishop announced my transfer to the Cathedral with effect from 15th January, 1967. On 1st January, I received a message that my father was at the point of death. Before I returned from his funeral some days

later, the transfer had changed to Our Saviour's Church, Odigbo. By mid-January 1967, we moved on transfer to Odigbo, to replace Rev. J.O. Oyekusibe, a former mate in the seminary. At that time, it was a small church with a few members who were very loving and dedicated. The family of Chief and Chief Mrs S.A. Ademoye made regular donations to the church. We had full support of Oba J.A. Akinrinmade, the Orunja of Odigbo. He and his family were very loving and regular worshippers in the church. Chiefs Temikotan (later the Olu of Ore-Odigbo) and Wilson were very outstanding members who mobilised others to pay assessment. Mr. S.A. Akindun, a dynamic lay-reader, J.O. Olafunmiloye, a very humble but faithful parishioner with other sons and daughters at home and abroad strongly supported and contributed to the progress of the church.

Among our distant members were Mr. (later Sir Chief) S.A. Akintoye, a strong supporter of our ministry, an inspirer and dependable friend of our family. He maintained regular contact with my family after we left Odigbo. 'My Pastor-Emeritus', Festus Adebayo too was a young active member. These members, among others made our ministry enjoyable through their contributions to the development of the church.

In July 1967, the Civil War spread to Ore which invariably affected Odigbo. On August 20, the Bishop of Ondo Diocese, the Rt. Rev. I.O.S. Okusanya came with the Provost, the Very Rev I.B.O. Akintemi (who was also the Archdeacon of Ondo South Archdeaconry) for the confirmation in Odigbo. The Bishop's car was the last vehicle we saw before Biafran Army infiltrated into Ore on their attempt to reach Lagos.

The following Monday morning, a funny, but pitiable incident took place. At a naming ceremony, as I carried the baby in my arms, telling the parents and the assembly to name the child, a Federal troop jet-bomber hovered over-head and

swiftly moved between Odigbo and Ore, dropping bombshells. The sound of the bomb explosion was so scary that before I knew it, the father of the baby had disappeared into a trench while his wife took cover under the table, leaving me with the baby!! The scanty congregation also vamoosed, which brought an abrupt end to the naming ceremony! The next few days were most terrifying for our members and the entire communities of Odigbo and Ore, most of whom had fled to their farms or nearby bushes. To take shelter in the bush was equally risky to their lives and our church became deserted.

My mother who had been with us since I lost my father in January was on hunger strike; as a matter of fact, there were no selling and buying in the entire vicinity. My wife was heavy, expecting our second child and we had cousins living with us. We also had an Igbo boy who was the church sexton. The anxiety and fear within the family posed danger and worry for all.

With the booming of guns day and night, and occasional incidental discharge of bomb shells, life became unbearably perilous. Communication was broken between Odigbo and Ondo. After five days of untold anxiety, fear and sleepless nights, Chief Mrs. Grace Ademoye, made her vehicle for carrying logs, (*Agbegilodo*) available to convey my family to Ajue where we met the Federal troops in their trenches. The driver was turned back from Ajue and we trekked to Ondo.

At Ondo, the situational report I gave my Archdeacon and Cathedral Provost, the Very Rev. (later Bishop) I.B.O. Akintemi attracted his sympathy. He however rejoiced with us on our safety and wished us journey mercies back home in Ifira.

From Ondo, our journey to Ifira was hectic and rough, due to check-points created to search every vehicle passing by. Travelling by public transport was equally exorbitant, due to the war.

At the home front too, the situation was unpleasant. As soon as we reached Ifira, we were greeted with the sad news that my brother at Idogun was missing. My brother, Chief Samuel Adeseluka Ariwajoye, was reported to have been hit by stray bullet when he went to his farm, following the infiltration of Biafran soldiers to the Mid-West. Nobody knows the true version of the story. However, he lost his life in uncertain circumstances. This unfortunate incident was, to my mother, another big blow. I had lost my father in January, my brother in July and my mission station now a war-front! A week later, my wife gave birth to a baby girl, which came as a relief to the entire family.

A week after I returned to Odigbo, fierce encounters ensued between the Federal and the Biafran forces which took place at Ofosu near Ore. The battle ground extended to and affected many churches under my supervision. St. Mark's Church, Ore, being one of the worst affected.

Return to Odigbo

In a couple of days, I came back to stay with my members who had been frightened and scattered like chicken. Their joy knew no bound, as they heaved a sigh of relief at my arrival.

As the Ofosu war raged, the booming of guns and bombshells, day and night, echoed by the hour around Ore and Odigbo axis. Soldiers from both camps had come to warn us against seeking shelter in the bush from gunfire. This warning restricted people's movement within the township which resulted in increasing influx into the church. Our church was turned into a second home for members. As a matter of necessity, many of the members, out of fear, permanently stayed in the church. Morning, afternoon and evening prayer meetings were full beyond the church capacity and attendants engaged in endless prayers. Soldiers marching to Okiti-Pupa were

rigorously combated at Ode-Irele, resulting in one of the most disastrous of the encounters of the Civil War. Ode-Irele encounter put an end to the war on that front. The prosecution of the war delayed my plan to go for further studies by one year. While I was waiting for the cessation of the war, I had the opportunity of doing my private studies in an old small library in the town.

Odigbo town provided me a very serene and conducive atmosphere to study. I often went there to read when my members, who were mostly farmers, had left for their farm work.

In the course of my reading, I came across a book that left a memorable impression on my mind. It was titled : “Life Triumphant”, by Henry Knight Miller (now out of print). Miller, writing on ‘Success’ stated among other things:

*I am bound to succeed,
I am born for victory,
I am with a fixed purpose.
Discouragements prod me on,
Failures are stepping stones to more aspiring
success;
All men are my helpers,
Whether friends or foes;
Friends encourage me,
Foes stimulate me,
My superiors must respect my sincerity and
ability,
I believe in myself and my task,
Hence I bow to no man.*

God has used the words of the above quotation to inspire, stimulate and challenge me to work hard. I believe that there is no human being who cannot achieve success in life if given the necessary impetus. I have had many instances of discouragement or problems created by human beings or natural forces, yet my trust in God has not allowed such to impede my progress or debar me from reaching my goal.

Goodbye to Odigbo: Our Saviour's Beloved Church

God used the grace He gave me to serve and bring an appreciable progress to Our Saviour's Church, Odigbo, within two years of my stay. Some of the most challenging features that we addressed were the payment of outstanding assessment and stepping up evangelism through daily and weekly revival services. The Church wore a face-lift with the renovation work done. Though, due to the raging war that gripped the entire area, the plan for renovation of the vicarage was not feasible. While I had the grace of being the minister-in-charge of the church, I also developed myself academically by passing the exams that I registered for. I applied to the University of Ife for admission in 1967, but the war prevented the admission letter from reaching me. As early as June the following year, I applied again to the University of Ife, but no response came. By mid- July, I decided to go and check at Ife if any letter had been sent to my station. But on the way, I changed my mind. I went instead to the University of Ibadan, only to be told I could buy late entry form.

At the end of July, while I was leading a crusade in St Luke's Church, Aramoko-Ekiti, at the instance of the Vicar, Rev. Canon J.S. Oloniyo, I saw my name in the newspaper, among those offered admission to University of Ibadan. After the

crusade, I hurried back to my station and then to Ibadan to pay my deposit.

Seeing that relative peace had returned to my station, the Diocesan Bishop and my Archdeacon, the Provost did not hesitate to allow me to accept the offer of admission to the University of Ibadan in September 1968. By then, the liberation by the Federal troops of Ore war zone from Biafran soldiers had been completed. The Rt. Rev. I.O.S. Okusanya, a lover of education, kindly supported my being sponsored by the Diocese, just as Rev. Seth O. Fagbemi (later Bishop) my predecessor did.

At the end of August 1968, my family and I had to bid farewell to our dear church members. The intimacy and affection between us made it painful to part with them. The entire community of Odigbo soon heard about our departure and came to attend our farewell service. Many of them were very sad and actually could not resist shedding tears. Our two-year stay appeared too short a time. Their only consolation was that I was leaving them for further education in a higher institution; this made our parting therefore one of mixed joy.

Undergraduate Days at the University of Ibadan

The admission letter from the University of Ife was re-directed to me in Ibadan, when lectures were already in full swing in October. Even though Ibadan was famous and noted for consolidated academic excellence, I still had a strong desire for Ife, the interest however waned gradually while I adjusted fast to Ibadan. I registered for courses in three Departments – my major in Religious Studies, and minor in Sociology and French.

Matriculation

The traditional University matriculation is used to initiate new students into the life of the institution by formal registration. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. T.A. Lambo, the world-renowned psychiatrist, told the matriculants and some heads of departments present, among other things, “It is because you are here that I am here.” This statement inspired all matriculants with self-esteem. He also appealed and warned us that we should let the University pass through us, as we were passing through the University. In the University of our time, virtues of

godliness, decency in speech, character and appearance, with respect for constituted authority, were upheld. University undergraduates too were respected for being law-abiding; they were free from certificate racketing, as there were no falsification of results issued from the Examinations Council.

The University of Ibadan and other institutions of higher learning in those days cherished the culture of inculcating in their products, a sense of responsibility to make them worthy citizens.

How different it is from today when financial probity has been thrown overboard. It is like sowing the wind and harvesting whirlwind. The writer of Proverbs says, "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice." (Prov.16:8) Acts of men without divine qualities often attract the wrath of God.

Sultan Bello - Hall of 'Gentlemen'

My hall of residence was often referred to as the Hall of gentlemen, either because of postgraduate students who gently went about their studies without much interference in college social life. Also very important was the fact that our hall never won any football matches. We often gallantly but submissively co-operated with other halls in defeat. My hall was respected for our humility.

Sultan Bello hall of residence gave cordial and preferential treatment to clergy and postgraduate students by assigning each of them separate rooms. Apart from my first year when I shared a room with Mr Adeyanju, a die-hard Baptist of Ogbomoso extraction and an education student, I had a room to myself in my last two years. The hall afforded resident students peculiar opportunity of proximity to lecture rooms. There were other halls of residence that were noted for violence and disturbance. They had their own appellations too, reflecting their attitude.

Rev. Professor Bolaji Idowu, Head of the Department of Religious Studies, told us at his first African Traditional Religion (ATR) lecture, "Anyone who is qualified to enter the University should be qualified to earn a degree at the end of the day." He used this to strengthen our confidence and sharpen our desire to pursue our studies resolutely and hopefully. The Department of Religious Studies was becoming increasingly popular and attractive to students drawn from across the four corners of the country, mainly because of the Comparative Study of Religions which had been introduced. This course exposed students to the prospects of probing the perspectives of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

The Head of Department, an erudite Professor, by his influence drew many students and lecturers from many countries of the world. His famous book, "Olodumare - God in Yoruba Belief" attracted interest and won respect for the department and the University. Professor Idowu endeared himself to the hearts of students in the department by sourcing bursary from overseas bodies for indigent students.

However, in September 1968, it was observed that not many students came from the eastern part of Nigeria due to the on-going civil war. Earlier, at the advent of the war, some students withdrew from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, among whom were Revds. Victor Sotunde, Gabriel B. Oloniyo (later Anglican Bishop of Ife) and J.A. Akinyele. During our course, before the war subsided, Rev. Sunday Mbang (later Prelate, Methodist Church Nigeria) and some Igbo students came to join us. They came from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

There were other lecturers in the department, accredited and drawn from within and outside the country. These included a Church Historian, Dr. P.R. McKenzie from Newzealand, Rev. S. S. Smalley (English) Lecturer for Critical Introduction to the

Study of the Bible (CIB), Dr. Muiz Goriawala (Indian) – Islam, Prof. G.J. Cowling–Hebrew and Old Testament, Dr. R.G.Bomstad and Hebrew Language Lecturer from German (New Testament), Father Dr. Obine (Philosophy of Religion) a Nigerian, Dr. (later Ven. Professor) J.O. Awolalu (Nigerian-A.T.R), Rev. Dr. (later Professor and Bishop) J.A. Omoyajowo (Nigerian, Church Historian), and later during my postgraduate days, we had Rev. Dr. (Very Revd.) G.K.Falusi, to mention just a few.

The Chapel of Resurrection provided the hallowed grounds for protestant Christians to worship. The Roman Catholic Church and the Muslims too had their respective places of worship. When Rev. Stephen S. Smalley, the Chaplain went on furlough, Rev. Dr. Akin Omoyajowo acted for him and when Rev. Smalley finally left the University, Rev. Dr. Omoyajowo became the substantive Chapel Chaplain. Ordained clergy students in the department were regularly assigned to assist in sacred duties in the Chapel, a reminder of parish ministerial functions.

The Crisis that Shook Ibadan University

The saddest and most tragic incident that took place in my 3-year undergraduate days was recorded in the last session of 1970/1971. We were preparing seriously and prayerfully for the smooth and peaceful end of the session with its final examination and so we least expected any intrusion.

Azikwe Hall was preparing for their hall party, a common annual hall feature. University hall parties in those days were very important occasions celebrated with fanfare and grandeur. Hall members eagerly looked forward to the occasion with pride. With the flamboyant preparation and hall decorations, halls tried to outdo one another. For what appeared a

mishandling or deficiency in the preparation by the hall authority, some Azikwe hall students staged a mild protest against the authority in the hall. Others did not immediately attach much importance to it.

On the second day, the protest was reinforced by more students from the hall. The third day witnessed a wild protest which ignited the entire students' body. Lectures were disrupted by students who carried leafy-branches, forcing out of class, students who had not joined, soliciting for support and solidarity. Overnight, the main gate was barricaded, preventing workers (including kitchen staff) from entering the campus through the main and north-west gates.

The fourth day witnessed a charged atmosphere. Early that morning, some of us clergymen – Canon J.A. Adebayo, Canon D.I. Oladugba, Rev. S.A. Adesina (of African Church), Rev. (later Archdeacon), Rev. Segun Bamisebi and myself went to appeal to the Students' Union president, Dele Bada, with some executive members to surrender the keys to the gate and let in the academic and administrative staff members and then resume dialogue with the university authority in a bid to restore peace and order to the campus. The president listened and would have reasoned and agreed with us, but some of his co-executive members objected, derogatorily retorting, "Those self-styled elder statesmen who feel too old to be part of the students' struggle in the college should go home. For us, there is no going back."

Throughout that night, many students, and mostly Students' Union executive members, were frolicking and drinking around the union building in front of Sultan Bello Hall.

By 5.30am there was an alarm from Students' Union building, summoning a students' congress, whereby some student leaders spoke on the situation. An outstanding female student leader mounted the Union Building terrace and

addressed them vivaciously, concluding: "...we are resolved that there is no going back."

At dawn, students helped themselves to prepare breakfast in an uncontrollable and disorderly manner. The items soon got exhausted in the kitchen. Tension began when they missed lunch, and when hunger and anger set in, then rampage followed. The situation became so charged that even some rioters were themselves looking for cover. Offices were rubbished, windows smashed, vehicles were damaged indiscriminately. The lives of university workers, including that of the Vice Chancellor, were in jeopardy!

The police arrived towards noon, spraying teargas and confrontation ensued. In the event, a student, Kunle Adepeju, lost his life after being hit by a stray bullet. His death caused immediate confusion, panic and real pandemonium!! The unexpected had happened. Nobody needed to be told what next—automatic and immediate closure of the University.

This sad incident, with consequent effects of the inquiry, had repercussions that affected the entire university system. Some highly placed university administrators and the affected hall staff were relieved of their duties by having their appointments terminated. Apparently the loss of life was a ransom for students' colossal damages. Examination dates were rescheduled after the Senate had ordered the re-opening of the University.

The Police were blamed for killing Kunle Adepeju by a stray bullet that hit him in the head, they should not have resorted to using live arms in dealing with students' protest. A thing that would never happen in a civilized world where the Police would rarely discharge arms on civilians. It was an act of disgusting behaviour. The death of Kunle Adepeju was said to be most undeserved. A product of Victory College, my Alma Mater, he was reported to be assisting to raise a fallen student

when he was gunned down. His funeral started with a long solemn procession by over 5,000 students from the University of Ibadan, to St Anne's Anglican Church, Molete (his family church) where his corpse was interred in 'mother earth' in the midst of thunderous wailing by students and many mothers who had never seen him before. This unforgettable procession in the annals of the University covered a distance of over 20 kilometres. The worst that happened started with a bad little beginning. It happened like a nightmare scenario, like a play!

Training Future Church Leaders

While we were still writing our final degree examinations, some companies and government establishments came round to shop for workers. Among them was the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) which offered appointments as Assistant. Messrs Aduloju and Isaac Eniola Akinuli urged me strongly that we should together accept to work for the council. I declined, since I was already committed to work for the Diocese which kindly sponsored me. My two friends later became high ranking officials of the Council. Another friend, a next door neighbour, Solomon Ayo Oladunni, who was the Sultan Bello Hall Representative in Students' Union and the hall social officer. He studied economics before joining the Nigerian Mobil Oil Company where he later became a Director. Some of my contemporaries got appointments in some establishments. Those were good old days when employment opportunities were in search of university graduates, and not vice versa.

As soon as I finished my exams, I reported at Ondo, my Diocesan headquarters, for assignment. My Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. I.O.S. Okusanya was on terminal leave, pending his retirement. The Provost of St. Stephen's Cathedral, Ondo, the Very Rev. I.B.O. Akintemi was the Vicar General. He gave

me a letter of appointment as Men's Warden and directed me to report to the Principal of Archbishop Vining Training Centre, Akure, the Rev. Canon C.O. Olowomeye.

My appointment took effect from July 1, 1971 which gave me the impression that the Diocese was in dire need of my services too. About the same time, G. A. Aina, my coursemate took up a teaching appointment with Oyemekun Grammar School, Akure. He was insistent on my joining the school as Chaplain, because he felt that I was cheated by being paid thirty-five pounds per month, while he earned sixty pounds! Mr Aina was not quite familiar with the church polity to enable him know that church does not pay what government pays its workers.

Vining Centre was founded by the Supra Diocese West, as an institution for training catechists and church-workers' wives to assist their husbands in church ministry. The centre was established to provide solid foundation and forthright leadership from the grassroots level of the church ministry. The Rev. Canon Cornelius O. Olowomeye, a native of Ilawe Ekiti, was assisted by Rev. Edmund A. Alieu who was re-assigned to a parish church before my arrival. Some of those who were teaching the women trainees to acquire necessary skills included, Miss Hime, Miss Elizabeth Deeks, Ruth Margaret Martin, daughter of Bishop Martin, among others. Ruth, one of the missionaries whom God had given me the opportunity to work with, can never be forgotten by the institution, and our own family.

Before we came to Vining Centre in 1971, Ruth had led Vining Centre students' mission to Ondo South Archdeaconry, in May 1967 with the Principal, Canon J.I. Falope. She stayed in Our Saviour's Church Vicarage with Canon and Mrs. Falope. Ruth felt at home with us, she ate our native food and lived happily with us in the old vicarage where Archdeacon Burton once lived in the early 1920s. In the training centre, Ruth played

the role of a mother to both male and female students who came from various dioceses. She encouraged them to apply strictly what they had learnt theoretically to their lives. They learnt to be hardworking, humble, loving and firm in performing their ministerial duties. Ruth spent over twenty years of unbroken selfless service in training manpower for the grassroots ministry of the Church of Nigeria. She left Nigeria on retirement to Stratford, upon Avon, England, where my wife and I had the opportunity of visiting her in 1986 as will be mentioned later in this memoir.

No better tribute could have been paid to her memory than the one by the Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh, Primate, Anglican Church of Nigeria, who himself was an ex-student of Ruth Martin. He wrote among other things:

"Miss Martins was a missionary per-excellence, who during her time in Vining Leadership Training Centre, Akure, successfully influenced many for Christ and moulded lives of... The wives and children of postulants she nurtured, like members of her nuclear family, many of whom are now committed men and women for the Lord ...through her impact on their lives."

Another woman leader who shed influence on everyone in Vining Centre at the time was Mrs. H.A. Ademoye, an experienced widow of Canon Ademoye. She was fondly called "Mama" and she truly played the role of a mother to all. My wife and I gained much from her wide parish work experience. Miss Elizabeth Deeks was another church mission worker with whom my wife and I worked. She could be described as a true Nigerian, because she was conceived by her missionary parents in Nigeria, but born in 1937 in Edinburgh.

Mr. and Mrs. Deeks were educational missionaries in St. Andrew's College, Oyo, between 1935 and 1939. Her father was the first science master, while Mrs. Catherine Deeks, SRN nurse, was the only medical staff, treating both staff and students who were sick.

When at one time, the first CMS Doctor at Ado Ekiti Hospital, Dougan Mayes, went on furlough and the wife of Archdeacon Henry Dallimore, who had child welfare qualification was also away on leave with her husband, Mrs. Catherine Deeks, being the only qualified medical person in the entire Yoruba Mission had to go to Ado to save the place from being closed down. With the above family background, one would appreciate why Elizabeth Deeks so committedly worked for both in schools, churches and health-clinics.

As soon as she graduated from a university in Britain, she considered coming to work in Nigeria as a priority. She took up a teaching appointment with St. Monica Girls' College, Ondo. When there was dire need for her services at the Vining Training Centre, Akure, Elizabeth gladly and readily left Ondo for Akure to work as teacher, first-aid nurse, preacher, counsellor, etc.

I have said so much about these mission workers who were not directly related to me. My main concern is to appreciate, recall and highlight the professional contributions they made to our national development by their selfless services at one time or the other.

At the Vining Centre, we formed a ministry preparing catechists for the church ministry, as well as for the G.C.E, Ordinary Level. Elizabeth taught the men English Language, Literature, etc., and also taught the workers' wives in training, domestic (Home Economics) and Parish work (wives' role - pastoralia). I could see that what Elizabeth was to St Monica's School, Ondo and Vining Centre, Akure; her mother, Catherine was to St Andrew's College, Oyo and Ado Ekiti.

Ago Ireti (Lepers' Settlement)

We extended our ministry to helping at the lepers' settlement called "Ago Ireti" – a place located along Akure-Owo road, a place secluded from the society and rarely mentioned, let alone visited by the public. We involved the Ministry of Health in providing health care and we paid when necessary. We called the settlement 'Ago Ireti,' meaning literally, 'Hope Camp,' to instil in them that their situation was not hopeless or beyond God's intervention.

At first, the announcement by the Principal that all staff and students would be going to the settlement on a particular occasion for revival was horrifying to me. After more visits to present donations in cash and kind for Christmas, Easter, New Year and other festivals, and for sometimes Bible Study, etc., we became invariably immuned. Ago Ireti presented a very exciting area for evangelism for our ministry.

It was to the glory of God, that many students who were recruited from different backgrounds – electricians, carpenters, bricklayers, tailors, etc., and their wives, appreciated our efforts to expand their minds, raise their hope and brighten their horizons as a result of which many attained high standard of education and reached positions of leadership, both in the church and secular institutions.

Looking back today with thanks to God, students whose life ambition was to go to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, were inspired, motivated and challenged. God used us to 'ignite' confidence in them, that they should transform their naivety to one of character and academic integrity. The talents that would have been buried turned products of world-famous universities. Archbishop Michael Akinyemi, Rt. Rev. Dr. S. O. Sowale, Rt. Rev. Dr. J.A. Oladunjoye, Bishop A. O. Akinlalu, Ven. L. F. Fasola, Jibor, Meka (the Army officers), etc., were a

few of living examples that I could easily recollect while writing this memoir. Many of these talented students who were not only sound in learning, but truly in spirit and character, got inspired by our counsel, tutelage and soon changed their vision from impossibility to possibility.

Vining Centre had enjoyed the headship of seasoned leaders like Rev. Canon J. I. Falope (later Bishop), Canon Isaac B.O. Akintemi (later Bishop), and Canon C.O. Olowomeye, among others, who were dedicated and visionary.

When Canon I. B. O. Akintemi was Principal, his report to the Third Session of the Fourth Synod of Ondo Diocese of 1964, prophetically stated among other things:

“The training of catechists at its present level may need to be reviewed in the very near future, in view of the increasing emphasis on a sounder academic background for catechists and pastors. This is all the more urgent if our products are eventually to be considered for admission to the ordination course in Ibadan.”

This vision sooner than later became the ultimate objective of the Anglican Church of Nigeria. Sound academic pursuit up to university soon became the vogue for theological education, not only in Vining Centre, but also in many other theological seminaries in the country.

Moments of Joy

In December 1971 when we celebrated a thanksgiving service at St Peter’s Church, Ifira-Akoko, my hometown, most of the staff and students got to know my hometown for the first time.

The second occasion of rejoicing was the birth of our second daughter in April 1972. Sola’s birth was heralded by

the students with great joy. They saw practically the naming ceremony as 'occasional service' being taught them theoretically in the class. This was conducted by Venerable D. I. Okufulure, the Archdeacon of Akure. The naming ceremony was also followed by baptism, conducted in the College chapel by the Archdeacon who was assisted by the Principal. The two services were attended by staff and students who showed keen interest in the order of service.

Back for Higher Degree

Undelivered Invitation

In 1972, Ven. J.O. Arulefela (later Bishop) met Prof. Bolaji Idowu at St. Paul's Church Igbara-Oke during the burial of Ven. Dr. J.O. Kayode's father. Prof. Idowu asked if he knew my whereabouts and why I failed to respond to the invitation from the University for a postgraduate degree course. When Ven. Arulefela saw me he accused me of my failure to respond to the University invitation. He was surprised when I told him I did not receive any invitation. He almost doubted me, but for the fact that he had long been my mentor and he knew that I would not deceive him.

A fortnight later, my diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. E. O. Idowu heard about it, (I guessed that Ven Arulefela told him) and he sent for me to find out why I turned down the University's invitation. He was furious. Again, I emphatically denied receiving any University invitation to do postgraduate studies. Then, I took time to explain to him why I was not keen. He was not convinced and so blurted out: "My dear, if your Head of Department has desired and invited you, then you must go at once," the Bishop ordered. He promised to find someone to replace me in Vining Centre immediately. This was not as easy

as my Bishop envisaged. In actual fact, it was after one year that a replacement was found.

After sometime I went to see the Head of Department of Religious Studies, Professor Bolaji Idowu, who led me to one of the rooms in his house where we prayed. After his touching prayer, he had a heart-to-heart talk with me. Then I told him that I was not particularly enthusiastic about research studies because of my disappointment in my first degree result, and moreover, I did not receive the much talked-about invitation from the University; he attributed everything to satanic manipulation. He made me realise that not all first class students are good research materials. He expressed a strong desire for me to come back for postgraduate studies.

In my 1971 set, we did not record any first class, there were three or four in second upper class while I was in second class lower. My H.O.D had told me to write a synopsis on the most favourite topic I would like to research in, while the final degree exam was in progress. This was submitted to my Philosophy of Religion lecturer who was on a part-time basis and was keen on being absorbed into the department full-time. The 'veritable weapon' at his disposal was to block the way by prejudicially scoring me as low as a 'D' in my best subject! Such was explained in the academic slogan as 'failing to satisfy the examiner' – truly, it was the devil's work!

Before I came to report to my bishop, Professor Bolaji had already contacted him. The willingness of my Bishop to release me came as a surprise to me, at a time when not many bishops would easily release a priest to do a first degree course let alone a higher degree! This was due to the fear that a priest might 'bolt away,' that is refusing to come back to serve after the completion of his course. Another fear was that, in those days, a graduate in the church could become a 'revolutionary,' and invariably uncontrollable. Students in both secondary

schools and universities were respectively regarded as ‘*Omo-garawa*’ and ‘*awon Omo-Radicals*’ – (meaning, grammar school products and university products being turned out by radical lecturers). The general notion was that products from high schools and universities were exposed to and had acquired ideas and views which were critical of church and negative to her practices.

Bishop Idowu, like his predecessor, the Rt. Rev. I. O. S. Okusanya, had progressive ideas, he was broad-minded, accommodating and a lover of education of the youths who encouraged their church ministry. So, he graciously released me to pursue a higher education, though this time, at my own expense. I had a strong feeling that the envisaged second university adventure was not going to be easy. My wife was running her Higher Teachers’ Certificate Training concurrently with my first degree course, and had just been blessed with a third child in Akure.

Confirmed Invitation to University: Tortuous Academic Journey

I left Vining Centre, Akure, with my family for Ibadan, to begin a new chapter of my life. The Head of Department of Religious Studies, Professor Bolaji, who was very desirous of my coming back, was retiring from university service and was assuming the leadership of the Methodist Church, Nigeria, as Patriarch.

My failure to return within two years after graduation, made me forfeit the university scholarship. I rented one married quarters apartment at Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan. The College organist, postulant M.A. Kolawole rented the other apartment for his family. Thus, I began with my wife and children, a journey the end of which I could least imagine!

Five of us were admitted and we began one calendar-year course-work of serious study – 1974-1975. We did all core courses, which included Hebrew and Greek languages. Philip

A. Dopamu and Dada Adelowo were the latest two first class products who had just finished in June that year; N.Y. Nabofa and Isaac Ayanbuike finished in June the previous year, and I was turned out in 1971. The course-work lasted one long calendar year which ended with an intensive examination. The results of others were released while mine was withheld because it posed a dilemma to the Faculty Board.

My former H.O.D had recommended me for 'MA Terminal', but my course-work result was as good as those of my research mates with first and second upper classes. The faculty board thought it would be academically and morally unjust if I was not allowed to proceed to the doctorate degree. However, a rider was attached, that before I could be allowed to skip Masters, I would have to locate a student who had a similar case in the entire University of Ibadan. Coincidentally, as soon as I was walking out of the Faculty of Arts building, the first student that I came across was a research student from the Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences. When I asked if he knew anyone in that category, he replied that he had a second class lower and he was in his second year writing his doctoral thesis. He also gave me two names of postgraduate students from other departments who were in the same category.

I submitted this information through my department to the Faculty Board. With it, my way was through. We were the last set in the university to proceed to the Doctorate by skipping Masters. While Dada Adelowo started his postgraduate studies in Islam, Dopamu and Nabofa worked on ATR, leaving me and Ayanbuike to specialise in Church History. As soon as we began to settle, we were informed that Dr. Omoyajowo, the only church historian, was being appointed to serve the Western State as member of the Public Service Commission.

For me, the second phase of my problem had just started. I had chosen a vast area of the then Ondo State (later divided into Ondo and Ekiti states) to cover as fieldwork. To embark on this, required a colossal sum of money. I was informed that I was no longer entitled to university scholarship, since I did not come back immediately. I had to source for fund to support my family and project.

In 1975, the Ven. J.O. Arulefela, being aware of my situation, contacted the Rev. Canon J.A.Akinyemi if I could assist him at the All Souls' Church, Bodija. The Vicar gladly received me. The entire All Souls' Church congregation warmly welcomed me when I was introduced to them. Through their generous financial allowance, I began to experience relief.

As it was divinely planned, in 1976, Rev. Dr. (later Very Rev. Professor) Samuel Erivwo who had previously served to assist the Vicar in the church, invited me to assist by teaching some courses at the Ibadan Polytechnic, Religious Studies Unit. Through this, he too helped to support my family and for out of pocket expenses. The Rev. Dr. and Mrs Sam Erivwo were very loving and actually became friends of our family.

Through the Ven. Arulefela, God guided us and used our services at All Souls' Church to cement the foundation of a life-long fellowship with some of them. Canon and Mrs. J.A. Akinyemi were not only happy to have me and my wife with them, they opened their door to us. Canon Akinyemi was the Commissioner for the Ministry of Local Government, Western State, Nigeria and Vicar of All Souls' Church, Bodija, Ibadan, a very enlightened and progressive Church.

My brief weekly ministry in All Souls' Church, Bodija, brought me in contact with some members of the church. People like Hon. Justice and Mrs. Olufemi Odunlami, Pa Sokunbi, Pappy F.E. Johnson, Arc. and Dr. Mrs. (later Professor) Bolarinwa, Arc. Ife Akintunde, Arc. Kolu Santos, Lay-readers Soremekun and Fisher, etc.

Mr. and Mrs. F.A. Fisher soon became our family friends. Mr. Fisher was very kind, he would voluntarily come to Immanuel College, Samonda, to bring me to and back from church every Sunday. A highly disciplined man, Mr. Fisher never for one day came late to service. He was very decent in appearance and loving and his sermon was often well-prepared, exciting and challenging. He admired, helped and encouraged me a lot. Mrs. E. Fisher, a humble and God-fearing woman worked at Oluyoro Catholic Hospital, Oke-Ofa. Through her influence, my wife was twice delivered of two of our children in the hospital. We had the joy of sharing fellowship with the family when I preached at the 70th birthday of Mrs. Fisher at the All Souls' Church, Bodija, Ibadan. Their children, Mr. Yomi Fisher, Yinka, Laitan among others, were all disciplined in the faith of Christ. The Fisher family were of great help to my ministry, even after I had finished serving in the Church. It gave me the greatest joy therefore that I was not only present, but also took active part in their funeral services on different occasions in Our Saviour's Church, Tafawa Balewa, Lagos.

God also used Rev. Dr. (later Very Rev. Professor) Sam Erivwo to help my ministry, not only at Ibadan Polytechnic but also later at the University of Jos. The Ven. and Mrs. (later Bishop and Dr. Mrs) Arulefela were used by God to counsel us in various ways. They served as our mentors during our stay in Ibadan. Ven. and Mrs Arulefela strongly assisted me and my family during undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the University of Ibadan. After he had preached at our marriage service, Ven. Arulefela became more familiar with our family and never turned his back on us, and our close association enriched our spiritual life.

The Search for a Supervisor

In 1975, when others had been told to proceed to the Doctorate, by skipping the Masters, mine took longer to decide. While my fellow students embarked on their research projects promptly, as they found supervisors ready at hand, the search for a supervisor for Isaac Ayanbuike and myself began. The Head of Department, Ven. Professor J.O. Awolalu frantically came to my aid, by taking up my matter with the university to secure bursary for me, in lieu of the university scholarship.

No sooner had I started on the practical side of my research work, than my supervisor, Rev. Dr. (later Professor) J.A. Omoyajowo was appointed full-time member of the Public Civil Service Commission, Western State, with his office at Ibadan. This posed another frustrating setback for me and the Head of Department, who had to look for a replacement. Out of his love and concern for the two of us who needed his supervision in Church History, Dr. Omoyajowo volunteered to continue with our supervision. This sacrifice he was glad to make but, for the over-load he would carry with that of being a full-time member of the Public Service Commission. Dr. Omoyajowo's decision to continue to supervise doctoral theses, in addition to his Public State Service engagement, would be a herculean task.

When Professor Omoyajowo finally left the department, there was not a single Church historian left to take over. All attempts made by Professor Awolalu to find a supervisor from the Department of History were not successful. Professor E.A. Ayandele who would have been willing to assist had just been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calabar. Dr. (later Professor) B. O. Oloruntimehin too had left for Ife as research professor of African studies. Dr. (later Professor) Ade Ijagbemi would have been willing to assist but his hands were also full.

At last, in 1976, Professor Awolalu's efforts were fruitful when he got a supervisor for us in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. A church historian, a scholar, fresh from Aberdeen University, who was based in Jos University Satellite Campus. He was Dr. (later Professor) Godwin M. Tasie. I was most excited and anxious and so he consented to my sending two chapters of my work to him immediately, following his brief visit to Ibadan.

Early in April 1977, I traveled with Pastor Babs Mala to Jos to meet Dr. G.M. Tasie. He warmly welcomed and assured me of his readiness to read the two chapters previously sent to him. After three days, this could not be fulfilled before we returned to Ibadan. He however advised me to bridge the gap, between Ibadan and Jos (meaning that I should explore the possibility of coming to Jos).

By seeing and discussing with a supervisor physically, my hope was raised as the last way out of 'hibernation' after waiting for over two years without one! He suggested a feasible solution to my problem but its feasibility study showed that it was more cost-intensive. It would involve the relocation of my entire family to Jos which two additions had joined since the postgraduate studies started. God blessed us with five, quite a bunch!

We lived in the days when we relished our favourite quotation: "*Omo ni ini Oluwa, omo inu si ni ere re...Ibukun ni fun eni naa ti apo re kun fun won*" (meaning, "children are an heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward...Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" Psalm 127) – days of little or no knowledge of family planning.

On coming back from Jos, my family and I decided to take to my new supervisor's advice. I applied, and I was interviewed and appointed Assistant Lecturer. Moving our entire family from Ibadan to Jos was another big step of faith and it formed an exciting chapter of our life history.

Romance with the Academia

Both Isaac Ayanbuike and I had found solace in our temporary appointments with Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, and Ibadan Polytechnic respectively. I learnt later that Isaac's appointment became permanent. We were jointly seconded to Dr. Tasie for supervision.

In August 1978, my family and I moved to the beautiful and serene city of Jos. I had to apply for and take up appointment as Assistant Lecturer to enable me fend for my family. Soon after our arrival, Dr. Tasie was appointed Professor of Church History, Head of the Department of Religious Studies and soon after, he was Acting Vice-Chancellor, University of Jos. By this appointment, Professor Tasie became involved heavily in administration which hardly left him with any time to supervise research work.

For a long time after, my work encountered a setback and suffered prolonged delay. However, I worked on my own with occasional meetings with my supervisor. As a Vice-Chancellor who was fully engaged in the university administration, no occasional time was possibly available for him to supervise a doctoral dissertation.

I observed that, although Professor Tasie was willing to do everything possible to make the time, it was increasingly becoming difficult for him to as , long as he remained in office as Ag. Vice-Chancellor. Professor Godwin Tasie, was a gifted administrator, and a very sound and brilliant scholar was like well loved and experiences and inputs needed by the University and his home-state River State government Mrs. Tasie, the University of Dublin-trained Doctor was the Medical Officer in charge of University of Jos Health Centre. Apart from sentimental attachment, Professor Tasie was quite prospective.

Tempted to Withdraw

Years 1980 and 1981 were momentous. On 22nd January, 1980, Ayanbuike came to Jos and we both visited our supervisor, Professor Tasie, who took us out to Emagu bookshop to look for a book which was not available. We had an inspiring discussion on our respective projects.

The first diocesan synod of Jos which was presided over by Bishop S.C.N Ebo, took place between Saturday 24th and Tuesday 27th May, 1980. I was very happy to see Professor Tasie preach on Sunday, thinking that i would be able to see him, before the end of that week. I too was elected Clerical Synod Secretary on Monday 27th May.

On June 9, when my supervisor came to my office to inform me of his appointment as Provost, River State College of Education Port Harcourt, I knew that I was back to square one and that all my aspiration to have my thesis completed, was fizzling out. Now that the supervisor would be going away from Jos, the purpose of my 'bridging' the gap between Ibadan and Jos seemed defeated.

When my supervisor realised that it was going to be near impossible for my thesis to see the light of day, he sympathetically suggested, on Thursday 22nd May, 1980, that

I should apply for university sponsorship to enable me go to University of Aberdeen to complete my research work. As much as Professor Tasie, as a supervisor, loved his students dearly and desired to help them tap their capacities, the factor of availability of time constituted the irresistible hindrance. My supervisor was a much traveled man. I met my supervisor at 1.30pm on Tuesday July 27, having returned from Rome that morning, and on Wednesday July 28, 1980, when I went to see him at 8.00a.m, I was told he had gone to the United States of America (USA)! He was back on October 10th and on October 11th, I could not attend his send-off in the hotel venue. On Sunday October 12th, at 7.30 am, I went to collect my two chapters from him before he left Jos for Port Harcourt.

In this perplexing situation, I was yet to understand what God would do with me; fleeting thoughts tempted me to wonder as to how God was going to prove to me that He was with me and not deserting me.

With seven chapters of about 775 pages of double-space type-written dissertation completed, which had intermittently suffered necessary supervision, my hopes and dreams were a month away from withdrawal! After three years in Ibadan, two full years in Jos, it was all a waste of time and effort.

The last time I heard from Ibadan Postgraduate School of Studies, I was told that my continued renewal of registration might not receive approval. So far, I had persevered by drawing strength from confidence and trust in God, whose might was sustaining and working in my life. This love of God was like a magnet that would not let me withdraw from this daring adventure.

Confusing thoughts came to my mind that the doors which God had opened, He had slammed shut. But if He so pleased, He might close one lesser door to open a greater one, even though I had no idea of how He would do that.

At home, we prayed together at the family altar. We prayed but did not know what God wanted us to do. But the word of our Lord echoed in my ear, 'Father...not as I will, but as You will.' Obedience and total surrender to God's will was the only key of faith with which I had to open the door.

God's Delay, not Denial

In July 1980, God brought Rev. Dr J.K. Agbeti, a world-class Church historian scholar from Ghana. He came on a sabbatical leave (I guess it was at the instance of Professor Tasie). God led my steps only casually to visit him in his Chalet at the Summit Hotel, Jos. I went in the company of a visiting expatriate lecturer from America, Rev. Peterson, who introduced me to him. He was keenly excited to know that my discipline was Church History and he showed interest in my study. He asked me to see him later to know what I had done so far. The next time I met him, he asked for the Introduction and chapter one. He did some corrections, from one chapter to another, and suggested a list of additional readings which I found very useful. The three months (July–September 1980) witnessed a period of rigorous work which launched me back into my research work.

On Monday 10th of August, 1981, I took the completed thesis to my supervisor in Port Harcourt. Coincidentally, Isaac Ayanbuike also came to submit his, earlier that same day. On Tuesday 11, August, I spent a night with the Ayanbuiques at Owerri before returning to Jos. The coincidence of submitting our theses on the same day was a surprise to both of us as we did not plan it before hand.

My supervisor gave me an appointment for September 29 and 30. At this meeting, he advised that the Conclusion be re-written and that we meet again on October 23rd. We had a very useful discussion which led to his final corrections. I took

it back to my typist, Tobias Megwa, to dot all the 'i's and cross all the 't's. I took time to read through the type-written work and do other necessary corrections.

On Wednesday 11th November, 1981, I left for Port-Harcourt with four copies of my thesis which received ready endorsement and final signature of my supervisor. And from there, on Thursday 12th November, I went straight to submit bound copies to the University of Ibadan.

Not many people would have undergone this kind of excruciating experience in a bid to earn a degree. There were people who started a research programme but withdrew midstream for one reason or the other. Different research students pass through different experiences, some bitter, others sour, only a few sweet. Those who do not have full insight into the whole story of my struggles would comment blindly that I spent 'donkey' years on the dissertation. Some close friends even said it to my face that I was so long on it that they nearly told me to withdraw.

The time I spent in Jos gave me a unique advantage of serving as the Chaplain in the Protestant Chapel in the University of Jos. I also lectured in the Department of Religious Studies. On holidays I assisted the Provost at the Cathedral of St. Luke's Church street, Jos. So my work as a parish priest did not suffer.

As Synod Clerical Secretary

The first Synod of the Diocese of Jos took place in July 1979; it was presided over by the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt Rev. S.N. Ebo with Hon. Justice Owen Fiebai as Diocesan Chancellor. The Very Rev. J. E. Adesola was the Provost of St. Luke's Cathedral, Jos. I was elected Synod Clerical Secretary while Mr. Enoch, a worker with the Industrial Trust Fund (ITF) was elected Lay Secretary. I made fruitless efforts to decline my nomination as

Secretary on the excuse that I was fully involved in research work and teaching in the University. But my nominator, the Hon. Chancellor Fiebai strongly defended his nomination, and since there was no other nomination, it was unanimously carried.

The incident at the Synod, particularly my election and role as secretary exposed me to the people. All over the Diocese, I became known by many key members. Soon, our circle of friends embraced many important people who fell in love with our family- the Fiebais', the Ayo Kehindes', the Ajoses', the Akporidos', the Pams', the Salamis', the Osujis', the Dandauras', etc., and before we knew it, our circle of friends outside the University had increased beyond our expectation.

Within the University Protestant Chapel, the number of worshippers increased. The Deputy Vice-chancellor, Prof. Ajaegbu, Prof. and Mrs. William Umezinwa, were among senior staff members with many students from Naraguta Hostels and Bauchi Road Campus who worshipped regularly at the Chapel. Their presence made the Chapel a conducive hallowed place of worship. Emman Egbunu (later Anglican Archbishop of Lokoja Province) was a regular guitarist. One of his numerous choruses include:

*Praise the Lord O my soul,
Everybody praise the Lord,
For His mercy endures forever,
Everybody praise the Lord.*

Emman, (as he was fondly called) was a remarkably pious, spiritual and humble man whose melodious English airs and lyrics brought life to our worship life. When accompanied, the congregation were easily moved to joyous dancing.

Emman's choruses soon became popular, well enjoyed, not only by the Chapel worshippers who looked forward to his presentation every Sunday but also the entire university community who were inspired by the lyrics of his choruses. Such special numbers gradually changed the tempo of our worship and gave inspiration to my sermon and mode of worship.

I was fully involved in Jos Diocesan activities – both in the Standing Committee, Board Meetings, etc., as the Diocesan Secretary. On rotational basis, the Synod was held at various archdeaconry headquarters—at Makurdi, Yola, St. Paul's Church, Jos, Archdeaconries, etc, all of which I attended as a matter of duty. At one of the Synods in 1981, Rev. E. B. Boluade (also a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos) and I were preferred Canons of the Cathedral of St. Luke's Church, Jos. My commitment and involvement in Church activities in Jos Diocese saved me from frustration and hypertension which the depressive research stalemate would have caused me.

'Walking by Faith, not by Sight'

Two miracles happened in July 1982, by which God revealed Himself convincingly to me that He is a faithful God. The first was when my wife's niece, Funke Dare, who was living with us in Jos, traveled to Ikare Akoko on Monday to see her parents. She left a wedding gift with us which she intended to take to her friend who was getting married the following Saturday in Langtan. We looked forward to seeing Funke back a day to the wedding, but she did not return. Saturday, the wedding day came, she did not appear. Her wedding gift was in our parlour, waiting to be collected. Saturday evening, she did not come, then Sunday and then Monday, again, Funke did not show up!

Then we began to wonder what had gone wrong. Worrisome thoughts came to our minds. When by 6pm, we did not see her, we became restless. I told my wife that I had to set out to search for her immediately that night. As there was no other means of finding out, no phone, no telegram, I had to go by road at all cost.

On arriving Ikare at 4am, I waited inside the car outside her father's gate as it was too late and unsafe to knock on the door at that time. By 5.30am, the gate was opened by Funke's mother when she was going to morning prayer, only to find me waiting in the car. She was most shocked to see me and shouted "Ha, Baba-Femi! When did you arrive?"

The explanation was that Funke arrived home to find her father injured as a result of an accident at a road-block between Owo and Akure. Funke decided to spend some days with her dad, but there was no way of getting us informed. I was however much relieved that she was safe and sound.

After breakfast, I decided to take time off to find out where marking of WAEC Examination papers was taking place. I had expected to receive an invitation which did not reach me before I left Jos. The exam papers were usually marked in July. There was no fixed marking centre at the time. I went to Ife (OAU), from where I was directed to Ibadan. I reached the Methodist High School, Bodija marking centre at 3pm.

The Chief Examiner, Mr. Chine, who knew me very well to be a Team Leader, did not hesitate to give me my packet. At about 5pm I asked to be excused as I was drowsy. On my way to a friend's house to pass the night, it occurred to me to see my Head of Department to find out the latest about my thesis which I submitted about a year ago.

On getting to the Oba dam residence of Canon (later Venerable) Prof. J.O. Awolalu, I learnt that he was in bed. As I turned back, a little maid called me back. Professor Awolalu

came out asking if I received any invitation to which I replied in the negative. "Then, why are you here?" he enquired. "To mark the GCE, A/L..." I explained. "Do you know your viva is on Thursday?", he asked. "Day after tomorrow Sir?" I asked to be assured. "Yes", he affirmed. I had no reason to doubt him, but I was too worried to believe. Ven. Professor Awolalu, replied, *'Two omo yi, Olorun ti o nsin yen ni ki o maa sin o'* (meaning, 'Man, never you cease to serve God, whom you are serving').

"But Sir, I did not bring my copy and ..." I stammered. He volunteered to lend me his own copy, if I would take him in his pyjamas to the Department to bring it from the office. On the way, he told me he was discharged from the UCH two days earlier after undergoing an operation after two weeks' admission.

After collecting it, I headed for my friend's house with the thesis of 775 pages, pondering on what caused the failure on the part of the University to arrange a viva before now. 'What would have happened if I had not come at all...a walk over?' I queried myself as I was driving to my friend's house.

With these questions in my mind, I began to understand with gratitude to God, Funke's failure to come back from Ikare, and for making me feel strongly concerned to look for her at all costs (even when it involved traveling by myself in the night) and also for searching for WAEC marking centre which I did not plan to do.

Preparing for the Viva

After taking a shower, I began to read. Under ten minutes, I began to doze! I went straight to bed, thinking that I would wake-up at 2 or 3am to read. I woke up around 6am. After taking a bath, I went straight to the library. From there, I retired to Ven. (later Very Rev.) Dr. G. K. Falusi's office where I read till day-break (TDB). By then, I had resolved, "If God were not

with me, He would not have brought me here, so, He would do it.” With that, I made up my mind that I would succeed.

The Viva Voce, at long, long last

By 9.00am on Thursday, 15th July 1982, I was already standing on the corridor of the Department of Religious Studies. About fifteen minutes later, my supervisor, Professor G. O. M. Tasie arrived from Port Hacourt and passed by me. Ten minutes later, Prof. Ogbu Kalu, the External Examiner from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, arrived. Other examiners arrived in succession. At 10.15am I was ordered in. The viva voce lasted about three hours. At about 1pm, I was told to withdraw and stand outside. Fifteen minutes later, I was ordered in again. Then, ten minutes after a unanimous decision was taken, I came out with a ‘Doctor of Philosophy’ degree (a ‘Ph.D’) award! One of the greatest unforgettable miracles of my life.

Having scaled successfully the hurdle of the unexpected viva, I thought the way was wide open now for publications galore, judging by the contents of my thesis – “Christianity Among The Ondo And Their Neighbours.” A Thesis of Seven Chapters, I thought would provide an up-coming scholar with sufficient ground for publications. My understanding was that God had intended to use it to establish me in the academic world, as result of which He made me go through the ordeal of research for many years with perseverance and without losing power or health. But again I was proved wrong.

An important landmark was made in my life when on Wednesday 17th November, 1982, I was one of those Ph.D. graduates who collected certificates from the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. S. O. Olayide in the Trenchard Hall, University of Ibadan. Among those who were awarded Ph.D in the Faculty of Arts were Darah, Godini Gabriel and Johnson Alex Claudius in the Dept. of English; in the Dept. of History was Oguagha, and Philip Adigwe; I was the only one in Religious Studies.

Preferred Cathedral Provost

In April 1983, a university colleague from the Dept. of Modern Languages told me that he dreamt that I was transferred to a big church. I told him, “as a lecturer, I am not prone to such a transfer.” Early May, a letter came from Bishop J. L. Akeredolu, appointing me Provost of his Diocesan Cathedral and Archdeacon of Akoko South Archdeaconry. Because of a very hectic exam time in the University, I planned to go to see him later—with the hope of explaining to him about my new appointment as a lecturer and promotion prospect. Moreover, there were older, and more experienced archdeacons in Akoko who could serve as provost. Why me by all means? I even hated being appointed there as an indigene of Akoko and the Bishop too was an indigene, which would indicate Akoko for the Akoko’s, the kind of policy that I do not like.

The following Sunday, I met Bishop E.B. Gbonigi at a service in St Luke’s Cathedral, Jos. I invited him for lunch. He looked at me across the table and said unexpectedly, “Awe”—(a fond Yoruba word for a familiar fellow), “Are you not the one that has been appointed Provost by Bishop Akeredolu...?”

“Yes sir, but...eh” I answered (hesitantly). I had not said all when he cut in, “But what? You have to accept it. Awe,” he continued, “You cannot do that, remember that eh...”

I understood Bishop Gbonigi’s frank talk for which he was noted. He had said it all. I had no-where to hide. I spoke to myself, “ Why did I invite this man for lunch? God, will you not allow me to stay in the University?”

Two weeks later, I ran into Rev. Canon (later Venerable) J. A. Iluyomade, the Principal of International School, University of Ibadan, who was in UniJos for a Conference. He confronted me with the same question: “Aren’t you the one appointed Provost?”

Later, I went to see the Lord Bishop of Akoko, the Rt. Rev. J.L. Akeredolu to express my deep gratitude and appreciation

for the consideration. But I demanded a little pardon for thinking otherwise and that he could consider more experienced elderly priests who could do the work. He didn't allow me to continue as he cut in: "...You know I am old, with only three years to go. Akoko Diocese wants young blood...they want you, so, you cannot do otherwise. You are coming to join us to lay solid foundation for the Diocese. You are coming to work, not for 'feferity' (Anglicised Yoruba-word, meaning, life of ease and enjoyment), we have no Provost's house, no official vehicle ...etc." He had said it all. With that, to me, it was a call to duty, a challenge; I stood up and prostrated and promised to send my letter of acceptance. I took my undelivered protest letter back with me to Jos. What was left for me was how to move my family to Ikare Akoko.

Pa Akeredolu was 67 years old when he became a bishop. He was a direct product of the Apostle of Christianity in Akokoland, Hon. Venerable Archdeacon L.A. Lennon, the Jamaican missionary. He lived and worked with him. Like Lennon, Baba Akeredolu was an architect, bricklayer, carpenter and everything that the early missionary was.

I had not known that I was on the adventure of a life time when I pursued and frantically probed a greater knowledge of God's work. Once upon a time, every believer faced a situation of making a choice between 'yes' and 'no'. St. Paul says, "It is always 'yes' in God and 'no' to anything that runs contrary to the will of God.

This reminds me of people of faith like Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Isaiah, Jonah, etc., who anticipated the promise of God and waited on Him, by trusting His word. These people of God were all looking for a better tomorrow and only with God in the centre of their lives, were peace and blessings guaranteed. God assured His people of old, " I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with loving-

kindness.” (Jer. 31:3) If God’s love is everlasting, it is relevant to every human generation. When Joseph was going through the fire of persecution, intrigue or hatred, God made him know and anticipate the plan for a better future He had for him. We plan, but God disposes, because His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8f).

Miracle Two: God, The Provider

After I had been to Ikare and indicated my acceptance of offer, I began to wonder how to purchase a cope – which was a required regalia for the office. One evening I drove out to inquire how to get one. I drove almost one kilometre, I did not know where I was going, I turned back more puzzled than I went out. I parked my car, went to my room on the second floor of Tundun Wada Senior Staff Quarters. I knelt down and prayed for direction. As soon as I came down, I drove out of the main gate and the first person I met was Hon. Justice (Chief) Owen Fiebai, the Diocesan Chancellor. “Nikita,” (Doctor, as he used to address me), “Where are you going?” he asked. I replied him, “I don’t even know where I am going.” “What do you want?” he further asked. Then I told him my predicament about a cope. “Go straight to Mr. Ayo Kehinde now. He will be closing his shop, tell him your need,” he ordered. It was so prophetic how it turned out to be. It was like the story of Jesus sending two disciples to a village to bring a colt which was graciously released for His use (Matt. 21).

When I got to the market, I met Mr. Ayo Kehinde shutting his office for the day. Surprised to see me, I told him my need. He said, “If that is what you want me to do, I will be too glad to do it.” He paid for the cope and issued a cheque to cover the cost of transport too! God of miracles and surprises. When I told some friends how kind he was, I was told that he had helped many clergymen who were in need.

On a number of occasions I have read and even quoted the restoration story of the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 33, and each time I come across verse 3, I have been moved. But it has never come home to me as vividly and as realistically as on this occasion. So, I read it over and over again:

"This is what the Lord says,... Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

God, who knows the end of any daring life adventure from the beginning, desires that His children should put their trust in Him and learn to call to Him and commit their ways to Him, especially when in trouble. God assures those who believe Him:

"Before they call I will answer, while they are still speaking I will hear." (Isaiah 65:24)

This shows how close God is always to anyone who calls to Him in faith.

We thank God for using Mr. Ayo Kehinde's well known generosity, commitment and dedication to advance His service and that of man in the church and community. He happily contributed to the development of Jos Diocese in no small measure, both at its inception and after its inauguration. He kindly allowed the Diocese to use his bungalow and its big compound to accommodate the first Diocesan Bishop, free for the years I was Clerical Secretary of the Diocese of Jos in the first five years. Had Mr. Ayo Kehinde not made his house available for the use of the Diocese, what would have been the fate of the nascent Diocese, could only be imagined. God never does anything just for the sake of the passing hour, it is usually for the purpose of serving as a pledge for the future of the people of God.

While recapitulating my memoir, his name and the role he played came readily to mind among the good people of God. In that very similar vein, we have such memorable recollections about Hon. Justice Owen Fiebai and his wife. Justice Fiebai made sterling contributions available to the beginning and development of Jos Diocese. Justice Fiebai as the Chancellor, was always ready to help and defend church cases and clergy whom he said were too poorly paid. He fought for the improvement of their service condition. His death later left a big vacuum in the Diocese.

When circumstances of academic expediency forced me and my family to go to work in Jos in August 1978, we had some misgivings and strong feelings of reservation, but at the time of leaving in August 1983, we felt reluctant and sad, not because of my painful parting with university colleagues alone, but more importantly, because of our loving church members and the conducive atmosphere of peace and harmony. We thank God for the opportunity to live and work among people so friendly, hospitable and humble.

One thing that surprised but impressed us was the way that God made people readily support and love us. My wife too made many friends in the schools where she taught even though she was made to work under those who were less qualified and junior to her, and she also was underpaid. Eunice worked happily without showing bias. She demonstrated the true missionary spirit of cheerfulness, even when she faced unfair discrimination in the teaching service.

Preferred Cathedral Provost

Reflecting on the fundamental issues surrounding my life pilgrimage so far, I began gradually to convert myself from the conservative picture of the ministry of God; I realised soberly that God sent me and my wife to Jos, to equip us, by widening our horizon further, for the ministry ahead of us. But then it was not totally known to us what God was doing then.

When our young family moved northwards to Jos in August 1978, it was with reluctance and difficulty, uncertain of what was awaiting us there. When again in August 1983, my family moved down south to St. Stephen's Cathedral, Ikare-Akoko, as Provost we were uncertain of what pains or interests were awaiting us. But this movement was with greater difficulty and repulsive reluctance.

Coincidentally, Femi and Ope were just finishing from the Federal Government Colleges in Jos and Langtang respectively. But they did not yet know where to go for further studies. Olusola, our second daughter, was very tender to be left alone in Jos, yet we had no choice but to leave her there. We were sad but it was the wise thing to do. The last two were pulled out of their schools, one from University Staff School, and the youngest daughter, from Alheri Nursery/Primary

School. Mrs Chike the Headteacher of the latter felt very bad to release her.

Sadly enough, we could not get any equally good school as the one in Jos. The only Nursery/Primary School in Ikare was located in one private house in a corner of Ilepa. How frequent transfer of workers does incalculable damage to their children's education! These two kids suffered the adverse effect of the transfer all through their school career.

Cathedral of St. Stephen, Ikare-Akoko

The Cathedral, located on the top of Lennon Hill, was surrounded by a predominantly muslim population. The old bungalow- 'Lennon House' (named after 'Lennon' the first missionary and Apostle of Christianity in Akoko) was on a high elevation overlooking the Cathedral. This served as the Provost's House. The Diocesan Bishop was formerly living there as the Archdeacon and Vicar of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral Standing Committee, led by Dr.S.A. Akintuyi, (Commissioner for Agriculture in Ondo State) came to appeal to me to be patient with a contractor who would build a new provost house and hand over the keys on completion in a short time. The Diocesan Bishop too supported the plan, but the mobilization fee was not there, let alone the first instalment to pay the contractor. I however observed and told them that the most urgent work was to effect reconciliation between our members, whom partisan politics had sharply divided.

The social and political atmosphere at the time of our arrival in Ikare was very charged. The tension following the presidential election of 1983 was so pronounced with disaffection that the supporters of the two major political parties, the NPN (National Party of Nigeria) and the UPN (Unity Party of Nigeria) became too sharply divided and their

members neither had any love nor zero tolerance for one another. Members of the same church who belonged to different political parties had their houses burnt and other properties destroyed.

The situation was not peculiar to the Cathedral, but it covered the entire Diocese, and the entire Ondo State. A particularly pathetic case was that of a prominent Diocesan official whose house, Mercedes Benz car and wife's clinic were burnt and almost all he had in life were destroyed except his village house. His political 'enemies' (political opponents) sought to kill him because he was alleged to have taken a major part in the rigging of the election. He escaped with his dear life when he went into hiding.

Another member's cocoa plantation was set on fire by fellow church members. There was a catalogue of bizarre cases of wanton destruction carried out by fellow church members to protest against election rigging in different parts of the country. The situation of other towns and villages in Akoko was not cordial. I had to go round some influential members in the community to enlist their support to effect reconciliation. This took sometime to reconcile members, by preaching forgiveness especially at the Holy Communion table!

What we needed most at that time was the kind of perception to make us examine issues critically and see what was wrong, to be able to create a sense of virtue by the spirit of forgiveness through Jesus Christ, as the essence of our Evangelism. Because Jesus forgave his enemies who were beating and nailing him to the cross, and prayed His Father to pardon them for not knowing what they were doing. Everywhere, in the church, schools and colleges, we caused the people to focus afresh on the Saviour of the world. Both christians and non-christians were made to know and appreciate the value of love by knowing the evils of lovelessness

or hatred. They learnt to demonstrate realism rather than idealism, Jesus taught us to love by action and not by word alone and we must be our brother's keeper.

To the glory of God, the atmosphere improved with time and harmony and brotherly love was restored. The years 1983, and 1984 were spent on consolidating the people in spirituality and we got our members successfully mobilised.

By May 1985, the Holy Spirit moved us to start the building of the office and Provost's House. Surprisingly, all the members, in spite of their political or party affiliations, rallied round and gladly supported the financing of the projects. Even two years that I was away from the parish, the work was still going on.

WCC Scholarship in America

In September 1985, God put it in the heart of my Bishop, the Rt. Rev. J.L.Akeredolu and the Church of Nigeria authority to ask me to proceed to the United States of America on the scholarship of the World Council of Churches (WCC). For the first time, 'Layo (my wife's fond name) and I had to be separated by distance between Nigeria and America, in 1985 and 1986, for the purpose of education. I thank God for endowing 'Layo with love, affection and understanding. While she readily mobilized to care for our children, I had reservation for the office and the provost's house which would take sometime to complete. Secondly, the move came at a time when we had just succeeded to restore harmony among the Cathedral members and life was becoming better spiritually and socially and we needed time to stabilize.

The family situation did not encourage me to leave my wife and children for one to two years at the time. I also felt reluctant to travel far when our two eldest children were seeking admission to the University. We were once again in a big

dilemma. We had long sleepless nights. After very strong prayers together, we left the issue to the wisdom of God. We reminded ourselves of how Moses encouraged the Israelites to be “strong and courageous...for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deut. 31:6) this promise of assurance was repeated in Heb. 13: 5, 8, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” more assuring still is the divine revelation in verse 8, which states that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever.” We drew courage and challenge from these.

We reminded ourselves of what God had done in our lives in the recent past and therefore took courage to entrust the future into His hands. We made ourselves to believe that God had put it in the mind of the church authority to advise my Bishop to ask me to apply for the scholarship and to give me his blessing to proceed. Ours was to trust and obey. In the words of St. Paul, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love Him...”* (Rom. 8:28). We claimed all these promises of God and held the belief firmly and stayed focused on obeying the last order, being the will of God. When God gave my church the authority and the vision, He did not show us the whole picture up-front. Every ordained man is a soldier of Christ whose bid is to obey the last order.

Last Moment Preparation

Although we had agreed in the family that I should travel, the children too were hesitant but they had no alternative, we thought of going to Lagos together for my visa. But later, I received an urgent message from the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN - an arm of the WCC) to go on Monday August 6th for my visa at the American Consulate. The visa cost me just three naira.

On Wednesday August 7th, the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) released examination results. Both children scored above cut-off points. Ope's high aggregate score of 297 made her a possible candidate for either Engineering, Medicine or Pharmacy at the University of Lagos. Since her brother had applied for Engineering in Benin, we did not let her take to that course at all. And because she does not like surgery, she could not do Medicine. So she was left with the last choice which was Pharmacy.

On Tuesday 27th August 1985, the entire nation was shocked with the news of the coup staged by General Ibrahim Babangida to oust General Mohammed Buhari and General Tunde Idiagbon. The Buhari-Idiagbon Regime was gaining ground for its 'WAI' (War Against Indiscipline) policy which changed for the better the phase of the whole nation. In the midst of the panic, confusion and anxiety caused by the coup, I received an urgent message that I should go to collect my Traveller's Cheque from the First Bank Ltd., Akure Branch. The BTA (Basic Travelling Allowance) was One hundred naira (₦100) only which changed for One hundred and ten dollars (\$110) only on Thursday 29th August.

On Sunday 8th September 1985, at 9pm I was at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Ikeja, to on board the British Carledonia Air bus to London. When the plane touched down at 6.20am, a lot of reminders came like a flash to my mind, stepping down for the first time on the soil of London that I had heard and read so much about! Dudley Stamp, in his Geography Book taught us in those good old school days that it was the 'Capital of the British Empire where the sun never set.' We were taught its history in Fisher's History Book, its religion in Cranmer's Prayer Book, its literature in Shakespear's Literature Books, its Mathematics in Durell's Arithmetic, its English Language and Grammar, etc. I had acquired much of

its knowledge in my memory, but now I could see a lot practically. It was a most exciting and moving sight!

From London, I traveled to New York, Washington DC, then to Richmond Virginia State, my base. By then, I was in the heart of the United States of America (USA). I was met at the Airport and brought to the Union Theological Seminary (UTS) by Mrs Margaret Koerber and Mr. Buz Hughs, and thus began another exciting chapter of my life history.

The Union Theological Seminary was founded in 1812; it was predominantly Prebyterian. All its staff and students were white and of the same denomination. I was the only black among fourteen International students admitted from different European countries. A welcome dinner was arranged for us on Wednesday 18th September, 1985, at the famous Lingle Hall. The Dean of the Seminary, Professor William Arnold (fondly called 'Bill'), Professor Ken Goodpasture and two other senior staff members joined us.

A sister institution only separated from the UTS by a road was the Presbyterian School of Education (PSE); this was a university of education, awarding both first and higher degrees. This institution was admitting both white and black students. While students from the UTS could walk across to attend courses at the PSE, those from the PSE could not do likewise. They however used the Lingle Hall. There, I first met Messrs Charles Ekpeyong and Maurice Edem who were Nigerians.

The first letter from my wife came in my second week in the United States of America; it carried the gladdening news of our two children's admission. This confirmed to us that obedience to God's command to 'Go' is often followed by His assurance of 'Lo' follows (Matt. 28:19 & 20 respectively). In other words, 'Go' precedes 'Lo'. It is by going in obedience that we have the Lord's going with us. He does not only go with, but goes before and ahead of us. I later realised that my going to

the USA was to go and study and learn at the UTS and PSE as a precursor to my future ministry as Dean of Immanuel College of Theology and Diocesan Bishop.

Studies/Learning

Leadership Courses offered by the PSE which I was opportuned to offer were very useful and informative. Also, was the course which Professor Ken Goodpasture taught final year students of the Union Theological Seminary (UTS). Professor Ken Goodpasture had himself traveled to many parts of the mission world and lived in India, East Africa, Ghana, etc. The contents of his course included the divine initiative taken to cross human barriers; Commission to the Church to abandon culture to adopt new lifestyle, etc. Prof. Ken Goodpasture (fondly called 'Ken') was particularly interested in the welfare of international students.

As soon as I got to the UTS, he arranged for me to meet the Episcopal Bishop, Peter James Lee of Virginia Diocese. When response was not forth-coming from the Bishop, a letter with my licence from my home Bishop was sent to Bishop Lee. He later replied, sending word that I could officiate in any church of my choice.

Study of Church Ministry with Professor Muchinson was also very rewarding. Professor James Smylie made the study of Church History very attractive and their knowledge of the History of the Church in America – a thing that gave the students special interest with enthusiasm. The two institutions, being Presbyterian by Church faith, had Sunday worship in the nearby Ginter Park Presbyterian Church. In order for me to feel at home, Pastor Charles Wills took me to St Philip's Episcopal Church where I met the Vicar, Father Allan R. Wentt on Sunday 6th October, 1985. Coincidentally, it was their Home Coming Day when their oldest members were honoured and appreciated with certificates of meritorious services.

On Friday, 1st November, Prof. Goodpasture led five of us to attend an International Conference on 'Dialogue between Christianity and Islam' at Maryknoll- about 30miles from New York City and 754 miles from Richmond. I spoke on Inter-Faith Conflicts in Nigeria. Among other speakers were the Bishops of Jerusalem and South India. In a similar vein, another sponsored study-course took place in St Joseph's University in Philadelphia. It featured the Life and Mission in Latin America. We were led to the Conference by the Professor on Missions, Ken Goodpasture. It started on Friday 15th and ended on Sunday 17th November.

Travelling by way of Baltimore, we drove through Habor Tunnel which is about two kilometres long – one of the longest in America. The tour also gave us the opportunity of stopping over to worship at the very historical Church of Pilgrims in Washington DC.

The years 1985 and 1986 were most beneficial to me spiritually and intellectually. With the assistance of the world renowned Professor Ken Goodpasture who was my guard, I acquired much knowledge, experience and exposure, through reading, seminar, travel courses, etc. The UTS though was mainly white, it admitted me as the only black international student before Dr. Majola Alo from Uganda came in my second year. The latter was a layman, whose ministry was working in an important arm of the Church as Bible translator.

Licensed to Drive

Although I had been driving for years in Nigeria, I had to obtain an American drivers' licence to enable me drive when my friend and I were to go to Tampa, Capital of Florida State. I had applied two weeks earlier for a licence to drive but I had to do the driving test which included written and practical. I received an invitation for an interview a day before. I was lucky to pass and obtain the licence on Friday 20th December, 1985 after paying \$9.65c.

The following morning of Saturday 21st December, I drove from Richmond Va, to Tampa Fl. Driving from Richmond, took us about twelve hours at the permitted speed limit. The parents of John, Dr. and Mrs Makel, were very happy to welcome us.

Christmas Holiday

On Sunday 22nd December, Cecilia came for me and took me to Aubundale where I addressed the Sunday School and worshipped with them. After lunch with Jim and Cecilia Hebbard, I was taken to Haines City to spend Christmas proper with Bert and Carol Saunders who were in charge of the Presbyterian Church. I was given the opportunity to address a large gathering on 'Nigeria, its people, politics and religion'. Bert and Carol made the celebration of Christmas very enjoyable for me.

The Christmas celebration was made memorable with affection and care for all international students by the special arrangements to visit the carnival taking place at Cape Kennedy. Our hosts were very kind to make us witness the world famous festival.

In Florida State, the weather was very warm and suitable. I was opportuned, among others, on Monday 23rd December 1985, to visit the famous Disney World, the Sea World, Kennedy

Space Centre, etc. These places were ‘wonderlands.’ Anyone who has the opportunity to visit the Disney world, in the words of Eugene Peterson, “would not merely be thankful to God, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God” for His wonderful creation. It is an indescribable amusement park and an imposing economic resource-centre.

On Friday December 27th, all international students with their hosts gathered again for the ‘Shopping for International Day’ to prepare for dinner. It was another very grand occasion for exchange of foreign dishes. This fellowship and that of the ‘Disney World’ were attended by international students from many other institutions. We were afforded the opportunity of meeting fellow international students for the first and last time too.

After the 7.00pm dinner together, we went away with our new hosts. A Chinese student, Kiang and I went with our new hosts, Jim and Marilyn Cummings, to Lakeland. The various arrangements made by the Church families for International students around Christmas showed how much regard they had for them.

The Envable National Psyche of America

While I was writing part of this memoir in Britain, the United States of America (USA) made another stunning feat of space exploration. Their last Shuttle Atlantis Flight returned from space with four persons (three men and one woman) in the morning of July 21, 2011. This marked American domination of space exploration for thirty years and it was worthily celebrated. Earlier in 1986, the “Challenger” Shuttle was launched, which exploded in less than two minutes after take-off, killing a crew of about seven which included a black American woman science teacher. It was most demoralising to the American psyche.

Addressing the American community, in their dreary mood, President Ronald Reagan with equanimity, gave a soul-lifting speech, encouraging them not to lose heart but to face the future with fortitude, because, he assured them, "The future belongs to the brave." The President was also quoted elsewhere that, "Heroes may not be braver than anyone else. They are just braver five minutes longer."

Twenty five years later, America proved President Reagan right in his prophetic utterance. In an anxious and troubled generation, we are most challenged by America's bravery; my personal experience of them when I was there, was how I found that they were very warm, loving and affectionate. America would encourage anyone to develop his talent and achieve his ambition. When you make progress you are cheered, and if you have a setback, you are encouraged not to lose heart but to try again till you achieve your goal.

This spirit is not merely commendable, it is worthy of emulation. I cherish Dr. Robert Schuller's view and principles which guided him and many Americans, and which can inspire us too. Stimulating principles such that are expressed in statements like, "I'd rather attempt to do something great and fail than to do nothing and succeed." This dauntless statement is in his book, 'Don't Throw Away Your Tomorrow'.

People often say that 'Travelling is part of education'. Truly, to travel is to know the world. The UTS Library at my request, was still sending books to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, and the Vining College of Theology, Akure, yearly up till the year 1995, the year that I left the former as Dean.

As Overseas Partner

About the same time that I was preparing to go to America, invitation also came from St. Alban's Diocese as an Overseas

Partner to come for at least four months in Watford Deanery, of the Diocese. The programme provided opportunity for ministers from any part of the Anglican Communion to live and minister among them. There was pressure that I should first come to Watford before going to America but we agreed, after much persuasion, that I should first go to the USA. At the end of my stay in America therefore, I decided to go there in June 1986.

I came home in July for the enthronement of my Bishop with the kind return-ticket from Watford Diocese. My new Bishop, the Rt. Rev. J. O. K. Olowokure graciously requested me to perform his enthronement, according to the Anglican Church tradition. This singular act of loving request won my support and loyalty for him completely. In addition to his kindness, he caused my wife to go back to England with me with the financial support of the Diocese.

Watford, an industrial town, which was nine miles from St. Alban's Cathedral is twenty miles from London, there were twelve parishes in the Deanery and because we were regarded as members of the team of clergy to minister in Watford Deanery, we shared our experience of mission in our country with them - how Christianity came to us; the part played by early missionaries; the unique role of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (later first black Bishop), range of churchmanship in Nigeria, ecumenical relationships, and so on. The Deanery had very dynamic branches of Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) and Young Men Christian Association (YMCA). We tried to link the former with our Cathedral branch back at home. The two associations had guest houses and catering centres for visitors.

Among places of interest that we visited was an Infirmary where children, especially babies with varying, indescribable degrees of health problems were being catered for. The Old

People's Home was another place that my wife and I visited. The aged, both male and female, were given adequate free health care, (exempted from tax), and they were allowed to enjoy free transportation facilities, etc.

The above mentioned healthcare for the sick and welfare care for the aged posed a challenge to me and my community back home, where the sight of the sick is detestable to us and does not provoke our sympathetic reaction. We, both christians and non-christians have a lot to learn from the affectionate attitude of English and American people to the sick, the aged, the poor, etc. The great injunction by our Lord Jesus Christ is enough to challenge our attitude in this direction (Matt 25:31-45).

Visit to the Andersons

We had a memorable and exciting visit to Canon (fondly called Baba, i.e. father) David Anderson, one time Principal of my Alma Mater - Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan. Father and Mrs. Anderson kindly invited us to lunch. I anxiously asked of Jeremy, his son who was a kid when we were together in the College in 1962. Canon Anderson told us Jeremy was already an Engineer who was married to a deaf and dumb university graduate.

"Why deaf and dumb?" I uncontrollably asked. "No discrimination, he likes it", he answered briskly. That spoke volumes to me. Many would be surprised to hear that in Nigeria.

Visit to Shakespeare's House

The Watford Deanery provided an automatic Honda car for our use in which we also drove to Stratford upon-avon, to visit Ruth Martin who was one time a missionary in Nigeria, and whom we worked with in Vining Centre, Akure. We spent a

weekend with her which afforded us the rare opportunity of visiting the house in which William Shakespeare lived and his bed in his storey house! The house had turned to a tourist centre. Shakespeare was the great English playwright who was born there in 1864. The sight of the playwright's house excited much recollection of his literature books I read in school.

The Deanery of Watford had a Training Centre for Catechists/Lay readers who were mainly for the lay ministry. Our visit to and stay in St. Alban's Diocese enriched our ministry immensely.

Overseas Partnership, was a two-way programme that helped to enrich both sides in resources of both spiritual and social values. God has made all people in the world of the same blood, being the same Lord, of our faith and baptism. Our four-month stay in Watford Deanery widened our mindset and our perspective of the ministry. Apart from being guests of the Mayor of Watford, I had the opportunity of preaching at St. Alban's Cathedral.

Back to the Cathedral

Before we came back to Akoko Diocese in September 1986, some changes had taken place. The first Bishop of the Diocese, the Rt. Rev. J. L. Akeredolu, who was in office when I was leaving for America, had retired, while a new one, the Rt. Rev. J. O. K. Olowokure had assumed office. The new Bishop was reported to have made an unexpected pronouncement from the pulpit at his maiden visit to the Cathedral that "Come January 1, 1987 the Cathedral should break into three, and that all Cathedral members who were coming from Ilepa side of Ikare were to withdraw and go to All Saints' Church (hitherto the Cathedral daughter-church on the north-west axis) at Ilepa; the second part to go to Emmanuel church (another daughter-church on the southern axis) at Edo, while the remaining third

part should remain as the nucleus to form the surviving Cathedral.”

The Ibo congregation members too, who were worshipping in the Cathedral were ordered to withdraw to start a new St. Andrew’s Ibo Church at the new market area, near the General Hospital beyond Ilepa (farther north- west axis).

This ‘decree-like’ episcopal pronouncement in the Anglican Church is binding traditionally. As it was made in the absence of the Provost, it created no small commotion among the people. In actual fact, they were thrown into panic!

On our arrival in September 1986, all those who were ordered to withdraw from the Cathedral came to me in turns. Instead of a warm, cheerful welcome, it was to register their sigh of protest against the episcopal ‘decree’ which was nearly two months old. I asked why they did not complain to the Bishop who issued the ‘decree’, too well that I neither had power to revoke the episcopal order nor was I in the country when the ‘decree’ was promulgated.

Paralysing Effect

The fever of the impending January 1st soon gripped everyone. The November Juvenile Harvest and that of December Adult Harvest were poorly attended. Attendance at Sunday and week day services and at prayer meetings dwindled. The Christmas and New Year’s Eve services were nothing to write home about! Everything was in a state of decline; as if the whole machinery of the life of the Cathedral was grinding to a halt. The eve of the New Year witnessed total apathy. It was the worst attended in the annals of the Cathedral. The people were confused; either they people did not know where to go or what to do.

Then came the “D” day, January 1, 1987. As the Archdeacon of Akoko South Archdeaconry, I had to be at St.

Thomas's Church, Eshe to sign the Deed of Relinquishment for the inauguration of Akoko Central Archdeaconry. It was the saddest part of the exercise to perform! I guess that it would always be a sad duty for any Archdeacon, Bishop or Archbishop to relinquish any portion of his geographical jurisdiction as a result of which he would be left with a shrinking remainder. In exceptional cases, an Archdeacon or bishop may readily do it if he knows that that area will make an additionally resultant area big enough and viable to form a Diocese over which he would be Bishop or Archbishop respectively.

Soon after performing the sad job, I came back for the New Year's service in the Cathedral. What used to be a booming service suddenly became empty. Every part of the service was affected – the size of sidesmen and ladies, Guild of Stewards, the Choir, etc, became depleted! What used to be warm exchange of greetings of 'Happy New Year' disappeared. It became sad and gloomy! When I wished the congregation a 'Happy New Year', the response was cold!

Immediate Aftermath of the Separation

A few non-indigenes of Ikare, who were business men, residing at Ilepa but who were without sentimental inclinations, remained in the Cathedral. These included Chief Z.A. Aralamo Famuyide who was a very passionate believer, even though he claimed to be an illiterate, but he was a highly informed and opinionated man who would stick to his gun no matter whose horse was gored! Chief Ibi Oluwatoba, was another dynamic, jovial and generous man. He was always ready to support the cause he believed in. Mrs. (later Chief) B.O. Badare, a very outspoken woman leader from far Jubilee north axis and her friend Mrs. M.O. Agunloye (mother of Dr. Olu Agunloye, former & first Director General, FRSC. Nigeria) and

Mrs. (later Chief) E.O. Agagan, a prominent woman-leader from far Edo-south axis, Chief K.K. Kolade and his uncle of 'Ogo Oluwa' trade fame were very devoted, humble and very reserved, well-to-do, God-fearing family people; Chief Fola Oniye, whose late father was a committed, die-hard member of the Cathedral had avowedly become inseparable from the church. These men and women, and a few others, remained faithful worshippers and maintained their strong membership of the Cathedral.

The Way Forward

The Provost's House which was under construction was at a total standstill. We met as a Cathedral Standing Committee to plan the way forward. No feasible clue or suggestion came from anyone. In actual fact, nobody knew what to do. God put it in our hearts to raise a band of prayer warriors, who joined us at our family altar every morning and evening. We praised God for what had happened and prayed that He would use it as a blessing to stabilise His work. Then, in an anguished mood of prayer, we desired that God should use the depressing occasion to revamp and revive the Cathedral.

All of a sudden, in the midst of this dreary and incapacitating situation, God raised a formidable trio who were talented and full of drive. One was Lawyer Olu Ogidan, a young, gentle upcoming lawyer, a member of the church, who was willing to serve in any church office. Second was Mr.(later Chief) K. K. Kolade, a well-focused, young promising businessman, a non-indigene but who had long-sojourned in Ikare with his uncle. The third member was Fola Oniye (later Chief) the youngest of them, he was a dashing man, full of energy and bubbling with life. He inherited a business acumen from his faithful father who was also a business tycoon of his time. The presence of these loving, proactive, dependable, young and fearless members provided a boost when the Cathedral's morale was very low!

Chieftancy – Membership Booster

Then, God put it in our hearts to choose new Cathedral chiefs, replace those who had left, and to appoint new ones who had not even existed before. We set up a Chieftancy Committee to do the modality.

The occasion led to fishing out many sons and daughters of the Cathedral long forgotten and they began to surface one after the other. The situation warranted my leading a delegation in my personal Peugeot Station Wagon (because the Cathedral had not got a single vehicle) to Jos to see a Customs Officer, a distant Cathedral member and indigene.

We planned hard and the Cathedral was seriously mobilised toward the installation service which was fixed for Dec. 26, 1987 – the Cathedral Patronal Day of St. Stephen. It was the most unusual St. Stephen's Day celebration which the Cathedral had ever had!

The installation service was attended by three Bishops and clergymen, led by the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. J.O.K. Olowokure. The occasion which brought a facelift to the physical appearance of the Cathedral, also turned out to be a spiritual and social booster that brought her back to her enviable leadership position again. The mammoth crowd at the service was beyond the capacity of the Cathedral building. God, on that day mysteriously performed His wonders. The Hymn writer rightly said, "...The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower." The Cathedral of St Stephen bounced back to glory and honour!

Again in 1988, God manifested more wonders. The new Provost's house, a duplex of six bedrooms was nearly completed when in June 1988, we invited the Diocesan Bishop to bless and have it dedicated before he went to the Lambeth Conference in London. By the time the Bishop returned in August, we had already moved into the new vicarage.

The Diocesan Bishop was later challenged by the magnificent sight of the Provost's House and urged us to embark upon building a new Diocesan Bishops court at Ugbe road. Many churches in the Diocese also followed suit by building new and modern vicarages for their clergymen to live in.

Dayo – A Hero till Death

Mid-1989 witnessed the death of my lifelong friend and Bestman at our wedding. He had been bed-ridden as a result of a motor accident of September 29, 1965, which affected his spinal cord and nearly claimed my own life too. Rev. Joshua Adedayo Bowaje lived a life of true Christian discipleship, a gallant soldier of Christ with unusual ability to persevere.

Dayo (as he was fondly called), was ordained and on Wednesday after ordination thanksgiving service, Satan caused the accident, and his hopes for a bright future were shattered. For nearly twenty-five years, he cheerfully welcomed friends and well-wishers and displayed unusual courage with jokes and humour. He never for a moment gave in to despair and frustration.

When I was Provost, I put him on the roster for Sunday services, which he came to perform cheerfully in a wheelchair. My wife and I took him out to Ekiti, Akure and other cities for service and sometimes for sight-seeing. He was ever full of wits. He loved ludo, ayo, card games and draft. He was a great writer and he loved counselling people with problems. He was too kind, generous and loving. I felt shy to look at his face in death but we thank God for his life of gallantry.

He was given a burial befitting a Christian hero. It was our greatest joy that God gave us the grace to prefer him posthumously 'Archdeacon' at our last synod in Egba Diocese. His memory was enshrined, 'Venenerable Joshua Dayo Bowaje'. He was a hero whose star Satan tried to blot out.

True Living Faith

Our tenure in the Cathedral was full of memorable model testimonies by members; poor and rich, literate and illiterate, of what God did in their lives. Some of them passed through travail or tragedy that turned their lives to spectacular instances of living faith. Our practice was that once in a while, and especially during revival services, we allowed members to testify to the goodness of the Lord in their lives.

On one occasion, one Mr. N.O. Olorunda, a retired top-ranking officer of the Ministry of Health, who was noted for his boldness, frankness and outspokenness came out at the revival service to renounce his membership of the Ogboni Fraternity. He openly confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of his life. He brought his secret cult regalia for all to see and leave in the church's archive for future generation of believers to see and realise the power of God over idolatry. This reminds us of what St. Paul told the Colossian believers:

"...And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Col. 2:15)

There were those who thought he would soon die as a result of his confession and renunciation, but no He did not. Chief Olorunda was later conferred with Cathedral Chieftaincy title of 'Balogun', i.e. 'war-lord' of faith on 26th December, 1987. He did not die. He became bolder everyday; he was honest, fearless and very dependable. He died many years after I had left the Cathedral at an age close to ninety. I felt deeply challenged by the life of this hero of faith. His son, an Architect by profession, had turned an Evangelist and Pastor in Ibadan before the father rested in the Lord. We praise God for the

faith and bravery of such people who strengthened our ministry.

Another member of the Cathedral whose life story touched me and many people was Mr. Agede poor a farmer, whose only son had a benefit of overseas education. Following the completion of his education, on his return to the country, he died mysteriously. One version of the story said he was assassinated; another said that he was involved in a ghastly motor accident, this was in 1986.

Mr. Agede (Agidi), an Ebira of Okene extraction, Kogi State, but a long time sojourner in Ikare did not renege in his faith, he was always present at Sunday services and never missed daily morning prayers. In 1988, a violent rainstorm which was like a tornado, removed the first floor of his unplastered half-completed storey house. This was a second tragedy that befell and left him with nothing. I felt very sorry for him. Moved with pity by this man's plight, I tabled his matter at the Standing Committee Meeting of the Cathedral for assistance. Some members however opined the discussion should be deferred which appeared a subtle way of postponing a matter that called for our immediate caring assistance. Many however supported our move and urged for immediate action. The house was re-roofed by the Cathedral's financial assistance and contributions of some good people. We did what we did as a caring church. Mr. Agede went to give testimony at the meeting of all Ebira indigenes in Ikare. He was the eldest and their leader, many of them were so impressed that they became Christians. As someone said, "If our faith costs nothing it will contribute nothing."

The third challenging and soul-winning testimony was that of Chief Mrs. E. Dimini Aganga. She was simple, humble and a very trusting member of the Cathedral. Her faith was that of a believer who for any reason would not doubt what

the Bible says. She saw everything that happened in her life as relevant to the will of God with valuable lessons to learn and teach. Her frequent testimony about these often impressed people and convinced them to believe.

'Mama' (as we fondly called her) often expressed the view that Christians should know that God uses the tough times they pass through to refine and bring out the best in them. The influence of the power of parental love and affection was clearly noticeable in her life even though she was herself a disciplinarian. She had zero tolerance for laxity and indolence. Two of her children who frequently visited her at Ikare and attended our services with Mama were Mrs. Labisi Latinwo and Mrs. Grace Alege; both testified that Mama's strict training contributed to their progress, achievement and success.

Mama's policy was that only the best was good enough for God. She often cited and illustrated with the case of Cain and Abel which she demonstrated when the Cathedral announced a list of items needed. Even though she was elderly and not the richest in the church, yet, she was spiritually rich and chose the very useful, valuable and needed item by the church - a marble pulpit.

One of her children challenged her, "Mama, why don't you go for something less expensive?" In a light mood but meaningfully serious, she answered, "Because God has done the best for me and I want to give Him the best in memory of my father. And even though I have not the money, I trust that God will provide." Her singular present of a marble pulpit made all the difference in the Cathedral. The title of 'Asaju Obirin Ijo' (Woman Lay-Leader) was conferred on her in appreciation of her services.

Some months later, Mama gave a testimony of how God had blessed her in succession. She irrevocably believed that God accepted and used what she gave as a living offering. Is

Mama's simple faith not true to life? Did God not look with favour on Abel and his offering? (Gen. 4:4).

Didn't God tell Abraham:

"I swear by myself, that because you have done this... I will surely bless you and your descendants..." (Gen. 22:16)

The Bible gives credence to Chief Mrs. E.O. Aganga's simple belief in many places, the writer of Proverbs 11:24 states expressly:

"One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty".

St. Paul too states:

"...whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously" 2 Cor. 9:6.

The reader would observe that I have dealt this much with the lives of the few people mentioned above, and sentimentally, that of Mama Aganga because of the lessons we learn from them. Their experiences and Mama's testimony have strengthened the faith of others. There are christians and non-christians who hold to this simple equation of faith and it worked for them.

From Provost to Dean

Cathedral's Protest

Six months before my new appointment took effect at Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, it had been rumoured everywhere, to the extent that it leaked to my members who soon became worried. A powerful delegation by the Cathedral was led by Chief N. S. Olorunda to deliver a strong protest to the Diocesan Bishop against my proposed redeployment to Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan.

The meeting between the Bishop and the delegation by the Cathedral representatives was to prevent my redeployment but it was to no avail. They argued that the Cathedral was just recovering from the effect of the trauma caused by the 1986 division which but for God's grace, and the Provost's God-given tact, would have been disastrous. Personally, I believed that it had been pre-decided by God as He had convincingly revealed it to me earlier. I appealed to my members that it was a provincial appointment from the Primate but they still thought my Bishop was the brain behind it, and that he ought to object.

That is a common feature in the Church, somebody must be held responsible for one's transfer or the other. I asked, "What if I had been elected bishop?" They said, "That is understandable. But for a Cathedral Provost to be appointed Dean of a Theological College amounts to a reversal!"

Many a times, lay members who understand little about church administration, refuse church workers' transfers by claiming sentimentally to love and protect their interest. They do so not knowing or deliberately forgetting that such workers are under oath of allegiance, and by canonical obedience, must not refuse transfer. The clergy too tend to forget that their stay in any parish, no matter how successful, is momentary.

Right Time to Leave

We give glory to God who enabled me and my wife to mobilise the Cathedral congregation by working successfully to complete the new provost's house and office which were regarded as a colossal achievement, and an enviable feat in the life of the Cathedral. It was accomplished within the brief period of our seven year-stay, part of which was spent abroad and the last four spent to develop the cathedral.

My wife and myself have now come to live in faithful obedience with all humility and thankfulness, because we realise that there is a personality behind these past bizarre experiences. It was He who has been charting the path for us. However, if it was the divine will for us to leave at this time, we were ready, though it would be most painful to part with members, it was most soothing to obey God's last order. The final evaluation is in God's hands, by the way, we loved one another and worked mutually together. A relationship that had value, God showed us what He called us to do and did what it took to succeed.

Unifying, Rousing Send-off

The send-off arranged for us by the Cathedral was most unforgettable. It was an occasion that brought pleasant surprises to life of the church again. Ambassador A.B. Ayodele (rtd), a very humble, loving and understanding man, did not see the separation occasioned by the episcopal order of 1986 as a dividing factor to prevent interaction. He led a number of Emmanuel Church, Edo members and some former members too from All Saints' Church, Ilepa, to our send-off. Ambassador Ayodele with his family who were of Emmanuel Church, Edo extraction maintained their affinity with the Cathedral. His son, Akin, with his wife were active, regular worshippers at early morning Cathedral English Service.

Some St. Andrew's, Igbo Church members, led by Messrs Gilbert Okoye and Sam Okorie (the latter was later ordained) were present to bid us goodbye. It was like another occasion of unification for the Cathedral and former members. The Cathedral congregation surprised everyone present by pouring glowing tributes with cash and kind gifts on us. The occasion reminded us of how God had used our little talents to sow and water the existing seed of faith. It was difficult to restrain some loving members' from tears. It turned out to be an occasion of joy, mixed with grief.

Back to Immanuel College of Theology

After seven years' service as Provost of St. Stephen's Cathedral, Ikare-Akoko, God caused His plans to be fulfilled by putting it in the heart of the Head of my denomination, Primate, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Church of Nigeria, the very humane and Most Revd. Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye, to nominate me for the Board of Governors, Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, for the office of Dean. I was duly considered fit and was appointed Dean of the College.

On Monday 3rd September, 1990, God guided my steps to assume office as the Dean of the College. I regarded it a great honour and challenge to head my Alma Mater, which had been founded to produce manpower for two major church denominations in Nigeria - the Methodist and the Anglican. I was welcomed by Very Rev. Titi Fatoyinbo, the Sub-Dean, who convened the meeting of both the Academic and Non-Academic Staff who warmly receive me. I was introduced to the Chapel congregation on Sunday and later met the Chapel Committee.

Living among the staff, students and the chapel members who were drawn from the two major denominations of Methodist and Anglican, the College provided one of the most interesting and exciting grounds (for a church minister) to find balanced and satisfactory ministry. Added to this, is the affiliation of the College to the University of Ibadan, for sound and strong academic foundation and pursuit of scholarship. The College vis-a-vis University had an interactive atmosphere which was very cordial, there was complimentary principle in scholarship, where free views were aired in research and scholarly interpretation of biblical text. The degree programme became very popular and attractive.

My wife and children could not join me immediately because the Dean's house was not vacant. After sometime, we settled down to serious work. We soon found members of the Team Ministry co-operative to work with. The Very Rev. (later Bishop) and Mrs. Titi Fatoyinbo, my right handman, Very Rev (later Bishop) & Mrs. Ojumu, Ven (later Bishop) and Mrs. Abraham O. Akinlalu, Ven Dr. and Mrs. (later Bishop) S.O. Sowale, Very Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Oyalana, Ven Dr. and Mrs. John Igbari, Very Rev. and Mrs. J.E. Elegbede, Very Rev and Mrs. (later Archbishop) C.O. Oderinde, Very Rev. and Mrs. B.A. Amuta, Very Rev. and Mrs. Abejide, Ven Dr. and Mrs. (later Bishop) Mike Fape, Very Rev and Mrs (later Bishop)

Bamgboye, Ven. and Mrs. L.F. Fasola, Very Rev. and Mrs. C.O. Komolafe, Ven. and Mrs (later Bishop) S.G. Kuponu, etc. All of us worked together like one family.

God gave us the grace to turn what was hitherto proverbially referred to as 'arid land' to a fertile one. By implication, the College was hitherto not attractive to work in, for obvious reasons but as God was with Joseph in prison, so He was with us and made us have favour in the College. By and large, the seminary became a place where prospective lecturers were proud to work.

College Chapel

The history of the seminary is full of stories of gifted people whose talents were either overlooked, discountenanced or even trivialized. They were not fully utilized to the advancement and infrastructural development of the College. Such talented people were intimately connected with the College and Government.

God blessed the College with a contingent part –the Chapel, which had laymembers, faithful men and women of integrity who had served or were still serving in public and private institutions. These members were Anglican and Methodist by faith and a few from other denominations. Some of the members were university lecturers, Company directors, professors, lawyers and other people like Mrs. Bunmi Gbadamosi, Wife of the Deputy Governor, etc. Chiefs N.O. Arowobusoye, L. H. Ogunlusi, E.O. Ilori, Z.A. Adesanya, Prof. and Mrs. Yoloye, Prof. and Mrs. E.O. Famewo, Chief Mrs E.O. Esan, Chief and Chief Mrs Olajide, Lawyer Ajakaiye and Chief Balogun among who made unquantifiable contributions to the success of our team ministry, and to the spiritual and material life of the College. Through their efforts, the chapel hall, and some college projects were successfully carried out.

Reporting College at Synods and Conferences

The official duty of the Dean did not limit me to administration alone. It took me to both Anglican Diocesan Synods within Supra West and the Methodist Church Nigeria Conference to present college reports. This gave me an insight into the goings-on in the two denominations, an experience that I could share with staff and students who were committed to our charge.

One occasion of interest was when I attended Kaduna Diocesan Synod. The Rev. Benjamin Kwashi was preferred 'Canon' in the morning Session and 'Archdeacon' in the afternoon Session by Bishop Titus Ogbonyomi the same day! It was a most exciting sight and the first of such that many at the Synod witnessed. Today, that beneficiary of one-day double preferment, an inspiring preacher, and talented evangelist, is the Most Rev. Dr. Benjamin Kwashi and the Archbishop of Jos Ecclesiastical Province.

One programme that attracted my attention on assuming duty in the College was the tent-making ministry which had just ended while the formal regular college programme for ordination and degree began all at once. Members of the team ministry were involved in both programmes. I observed that working all through the exhausting academic session and long holiday without having any time to rest or for recuperating, would soon make their job boring. There was hardly any work-free time for them as a result.

The main duty of the Academic Staff was to prepare students for the ordination course. To prepare students for the degree course of studies was exacting for lecturers who were under-remunerated. Considering how much load they had to carry, I had no option but to register a strong appeal to the governing board to review their stipends. There was great joy when the draft came before the governing board which appreciably jerked up the stipends in 1992.

As for the tent-making programme itself, I recommended that one-month-course of studies per annum, done in three years, amounting to three months' training was grossly inadequate time for theological training to cover the course contents that regular ordination students cover. The plan to increase the period to five years was in the pipeline when my election took place. The academic staff members realised and agreed to effect this change too. No sooner had I left than the college trustees decided to scrap the programme altogether.

1993 – A Year of Crises

The year 1993 was our saddest in Immanuel College. The year's melancholy tale for the College was an off-shoot of our national history of tragic political power game.

Early in the year, we made elaborate arrangement to launch an appeal fund for the completion of the College Library that was under construction. The political crisis resulting from Oyo State House of Assembly election crisis seriously affected the event that was scheduled for April before the Presidential election. It was not only the College, but the entire country was walking in socio-political darkness. The entire nation was falling apart due to the political situation in the country. The Building Committee under the chairmanship of Hon. Justice Olu Ayoola (rtd), later postponed the launching, as the prospect of its success became doubtful. It was painful, but it was the wise thing to do in the circumstance.

However, we were able to roof and plaster the library building before we left the College. It was not easy but God did it to the surprise of many and with the financial management-ingenuity of Chief G.O. Osoba, the College Treasurer, who helped to expeditiously manage the available money for the project.

June 12, 1993 and events that followed will never be forgotten in the history of Nigeria. It was a year that brought the entire country and many individual homes untold sorrow. It would have brought joy and gladness but for the twist of the presidential election result, which was done by the military Head of State, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, who denied Moshood Kashimawo Abiola, his rightful victory in the election, said to be the fairest in the annals of politics in Nigeria. Protests, demonstrations and strikes uncontrollably followed everywhere. All Hospitals in Ibadan – the UCH, Adeoyo, Orita mefa, Oluyoro, etc. closed down; no hospital worked. Instead, there was bornfire everywhere, it was as if the total machinery of human existence was grinding to a halt.

My Double Tragedy

In the midst of all the chaos and crisis, I met my dear brother and benefactor on his sick- bed while I went to Akoko for the funeral of late Ven. M.O. Obadofin, a colleague whom I worked with in Akoko Diocese. I brought him from home on July 13, and took him to the only available Afrik Hospital at Challenge, Ibadan, with limited facilities. The doctor told me it was not a serious case and that within three days, he would be alright.

The second day, my wife and I had to drive through road blocks to see him at night and we were with him till 11pm. He appeared better, related well with us and even urged us to go back before it was too late. At 9.00am the following morning, the third day of his admission, the junior doctor reported in my office that my brother was dead! He was indeed in the bosom of Christ! How short life is and how uncertain the hour of death! My wife, children and team ministry members and the entire congregation and college community joined me to mourn the loss of my life mentor and the architect of my success story! But the mourning that had a national outlook was that of

our politically broken community which was caused by political power game, the lie of which could only be exposed and cured by the spiritual power of God. The loss of my brother was a precursor to another inevitable loss. With my aged mother living with me, how could I manage this bereavement? I warned my wife against letting her know, lest we had double loss. But double tragedy was inevitable!

For a few days, we pretended as if nothing happened and that brother had not been discharged because of the crisis. The situation was becoming more complex for me to handle. Burial arrangements, casual sympathisers' visits, unscheduled visitors' prayers, the family joviality that suddenly disappeared, people's suspicious brisk movements, etc. No feigned explanation about the condition of my brother satisfied her.

After sometime, she told my wife to stop preparing food for her. She did not tell us why she so decided. She would not listen to anyone's plea either. For an old woman to go on hunger strike was to voluntarily retire to the threshold of death.

By the time that we were going home for brother's burial, my mother was already in a state of coma. With the assistance of Chief G.O. Osoba and Otunba B.A.Oduntan (Senior), two medical doctors were detailed to oversee her condition and my sister from Ondo stayed with her. Their presence and counsel gave me confidence to lead my brother's funeral procession to Ifira leaving my mother at the point of death in Ibadan. It was very hard for me to leave her. We went ahead to give a decent burial to my brother at St Peter's Church, Ifira-Akoko, and had the following inscription on his tombstone:

In Memory Of Mr. Zachariah Ademola Owadayo
(Died 16 July, 1993)
Aged 78

An unforgettable Brother who played the role of a father. The Architect of our success story. The joy of life is produced by people of purpose and vision, with affectionate and selfless service.

RIP
By Matthew Oluremi Owadayo
For the Family

Three days after my brother's burial, my mother too, on our arms, rested peacefully in the Lord at the age of 102 years. My dear mother could not survive the agonising loss of her dear son! He was her life-long close associate, too close for her to miss. Part of the epitaph on my Mother's tombstone read thus:

Mama Sarah Asake Owadayo
(Died July 1993)
Aged c. 102 years

May God Almighty rest your loving, gentle, but bold soul safely in His bosom.

– ***Children.***

David the Psalmist said:

"Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." 27:30)

Following the bereavements of my mother and brother, the two life pillars of support, life became void to me. Two people who gave me pleasure and whom I would have loved to contemplate for longer than death would permit, were just removed regardlessly by death, the same month in succession!

Sudden Wind-fall

After the funeral service for my brother at St. Peter's Church, Ifira-Akoko, a white-bearded clergyman in mufti was patiently waiting outside to see me pass by. I could recognize that he was no other person than the Revd Canon J.O. Fagboyegun, an Owo-farmer turned clergy as a result of his passionate desire for evangelism. He moved close to me and carefully expressed condolence, and unnoticed slipped into my hand an envelope containing some amount; he said, "Accept my sympathy sir," and immediately disappeared. I was surprised to see him and actually wondered how he got to know about it all.

I wish to say one or two things about Canon Fagboyegun. Up till the time of writing this memoir, I did not know who told him that I lost my brother and mother in succession; or how he knew I was in dire need of financial aid. He did not send the gift, but he came personally from Owo to give me.

I first met Canon Fagboyegun in 1987 when the two sister-dioceses of Owo and Akoko had a joint Clergy School at St John/Mary's College Campus, Owo, organized by the two Diocesans Bishops A.O.Awosan and J.O.K. Olowokure. After about four days, the school ended and we parted. Since that time, no occasion brought us together. I used to hear only of how he generously and fervently supported St Andrew's Church, (later Cathedral) Owo.

God caused our journey of faith to establish relationships, not through long association, but by casual contact. In the

process of this casual contact, God made Revd Canon Fagboyegun to help me at a time when I was in dire need of help. He did it expecting nothing in return. Such little acts of kindness by true Christian love have impacted human lives effectively more than all theological sermons on love in the world.

Stories were told of how Canon Fagboyegun contributed substantially to the developments of St. Andrew's Church Owo, in cash and kind. He was said to have unilaterally purchased an expensive pipe-organ by order, for the use of the Cathedral. I knew of people, both clergy and lay and even bishops, who were beneficiaries of his humanitarian services.

In February 1996, when armed robbers broke into our residence (Bishopscourt) at Onikolobo, Abeokuta, and made away with my episcopal robes, signet ring, pectoral cross and my wife's trinkets and children's handsets and other effects, I guess that Canon Fagboyegun probably got to know through the Newspapers. He privately sent me a parcel, containing episcopal robes, as a soothing replacement for some of the items lost to robbers. He was very kind to me even when I had never visited nor asked him for any obligation. I thus decided to visit and thank him one day at Owo when I was coming from Ifira, my hometown on the way to Abeokuta.

At 8 am, I was there only to meet him already busy with his farmwork. He had various plantations – cassava, yam, palm, pine-apple, cashew, etc. This gives credence to the saying of the writer of Proverbs 10:4 "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth." But as wealthy as he could relatively be considered, Rev. Canon Fagboyegun did not flaunt his wealth in the ostentatious manner, typical of some wealthy Nigerians.

The more Canon Fagboyegun was giving to charity, the more God was blessing him. He wisely invested in various ways

and he was immensely blessed. His attitude encouraged economic emancipation among his fellow Christians and motivated his community to work hard and have enough to share with those in need (Eph. 4:28).

Canon Fagboyegun was too committed a Christian to be lured into active or partisan politics, the refusal of which attracted the wrath, malice, even brawling, of some of his over-zealous community people. When the resultant persecution assumed a dimension of severity with intensity, he painfully had to flee from Owo where he had long lived to Akure.

Nothing indeed, is more striking about Canon Fagboyegun than the way he managed the crisis, with calm, dignified and decorous behaviour. This was the most winsome moment of Canon Fagboyegun's life; he was neither ruffled nor bitter. Rather, he showed cool courage in the face of torment, irritation and aggression. He maintained courtesy towards enemies, a conduct that followed a Christ-like virtue, the very core of our faith. This was a reminder of the love that has conquered the world with: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

At his funeral, two eminent retired Anglican prelates – Bishops I. B. O. Akintemi and E.B.Gbonigi testified that he was a man of destiny whose charitable qualities and leadership skills were used by God to make his ordained ministry impact very many lives. His purposeful life posed a challenge to our generation noted for mere extravagance.

Exemplary Faith of an Evangelist

In the course of my ministry, I have come across many people who demonstrated their saintly faith in God in a bewildering multi-spiritual diversity. Some were as challenging as they

were puzzling. They included cases of bold discipleship to strengthen our confidence about eternal life; to stimulate our hope and foretaste of the bliss of heaven. The gospel of God's love captures the whole of human life – heart, mind and will, as a result of which faith is expressed in various forms.

The confirmation of such a faith was shown in the life of one of the former graduates of Immanuel College of Theology tent-making ministry, a woman Lay-Reader and member of All Saints' Church, Jericho, Ibadan - Evangelist Lydia Olatoye, a Chief Nursing Staff at the School of Nursing, UCH Ibadan. She and her husband demonstrated special powers of faith tested for their loyalty to Christ and love for their fellowmen.

Mrs Lydia Olatoye called the Chaplain, Ven.(later Bishop) Abraham Akinlalu to inform him of the sudden death of her son, a medical student. Evangelist Lydia Olatoye and her husband, a Veterinary Doctor and Director of Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), Ibadan, along Ijebu-Ode Road, were asking for Christian burial service for their son at Sango Cemetery.

While the burial service was going on, my wife and I drove to the CRIN residence of the Olatoyes to express condolence. We were most surprised that the Olatoyes turned the crowd of sympathisers to a gathering of praise worshippers. She herself was leading the praise for the son's life while her husband, Dr. Samuel T. Olatoye was on the organ! Turning an occasion that was supposed to be sober and mournful to one of praise-worship? Most incredible!

That was not all. On Sunday, Evangelist Lydia Olatoye incredibly preached at All Saints' Church, Jericho, without letting the vicar know what had happened during the week. She broke the sad news only after the service. Asked why she did that, she said, "It was to shame the devil who wanted to spoil my joy and prevent me from preaching." What a faith in

action! Lydia's faith sobered many people who heard about her demonstratoin of faith and courage which appeared a category all by itself. It is unique and unparalleled.

Message of History

The truths of the life of these personalities enunciated earlier speaks to us that people who are in God and in whom God is are special. They are spiritually healthy and live productive lives. To them, the only opinion that counts, is God's opinion on which they build their lives. The truths and implications of their belief go beyond them and send a challenge to generations unborn.

In our Christian life, the most challenging area is where we are confronted with bereavement or assailed by sickness, loss of property or even sudden death of dear ones. Such cases of grief, were areas of life which did not only touch but challenged Jesus when He was bodily on earth. For example, He was moved to shedding tears over the death of Lazarus. The pitiable sight of the hungry crowd moved Him with compassion and refused to send them away for fear of fainting on the way. Job was a very good, pious and God-fearing man and he had all family, abundant possessions, even his health taken away. Yet, he still held to his faith.

He acknowledged the Almightyness, the sovereignty of God. Naturally, any human beings' reaction to loss of property or life is grief, but a believer in Jesus Christ is enjoined not to allow excessive grief to rob him of harmony or fellowship with the Holy Spirit the Comforter. St. Paul warned his Thessalonian audience not to be ignorant about those who fall asleep or grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope...(1 Thes. 4:13).

Theological Education

The most challenging period of my life ministry came when I had the unique fortune of serving in Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, my Alma Mater, not only as a lecturer but as Dean. I was fortunate to be sent to the Seminary as predestined by God (I believe) and to have able hands of a sound Team Ministry to work with. I had the strong belief that He sent us to prepare sound future leadership for His church. To tackle such a task, we had to go to the taproot which no doubt was and it is still sound theological education.

Theological education is one form of education that is very expensive to dispense or afford all over the world. The government has no stake, neither does the church nor the public quite appreciate its value to the extent of financing it directly. Consequently, seminaries are never adequately funded.

A teacher often told us, "If you think education does not pay, try illiteracy; in the long run, you will discover that the latter is more expensive than the former." And for Theological Education per se, it is more truly expensive. I often remember my Church History Professor, James H. Smylie, in the Union Theological Seminary (UTS) Richmond, Va. who said, "I would rather part with my cloak than my books." I saw his personal library which was as big as a college library.

As Dean, my team ministry members and I were in the saddle of performing the sacred duty of training students who would go out to "be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God..."(Eph.4:12-13). For the accomplishment of this sacred assignment, teaching of sound doctrine with education was basic. This principle was applicable to the entire theological education formation.

In preparing postulants at all levels, we stuck to this principle which we believed (and I still do), would make them relevant to the needs of every generation church. From an ecumenical perspective, studies are designed to help the postulants to develop and appreciate the social and historical character of Christian life and community for integrative Church-State relations.

I used to tell my polity class and the general assembly of students not to be anxious to rush for preferment in the parish but first get themselves educationally equipped. In an ideal church situation, you do not look or scramble for an office, the office looks for who is qualified to occupy it. To forget the divine side and allow scrambling for office to be the order of the day, can lead to a dangerous fashion of allowing the world to enter the church.

Following this principle, we decided to review and increase the course duration for tent-making from three to four years in the first instance, then to five years so as to enable them to cover the course contents required. I did not and cannot see how anyone can cover the syllabus of three full-year-course in a yearly one-month instalmental doses (in other words, it is training a seminarian for just three months altogether!). I have written much above on this issue which the Trustees of our theological institutions were said to be addressing from determined point of objectivity. Their aims, goals and objectives are often spelt out in their constitution.

Sadly, theological education formation was not being given the financial attention it deserved. Because of its poor funding, those who were running full training courses were facing lots of challenges. The Dean was often faced with the problem of running from one Trustee to another, looking for money for running expenses.

The former Primate of the Church of Nigeria, Most Revd. Peter Jasper Akinola, was aware of the need for sound theological education when he grant-aided our theological colleges to the tune of about ten million naira. He was much in sympathy with the poor financial state of these seminaries. Primate Akinola had a focus part of which no doubt was intended to ameliorate the conditions of the seminaries in all their physical and spiritual ramifications.

In the spirit of integration, Primate Akinola commissioned the Church of Nigeria Theological and Doctrinal Committee (CNTDC) of which I was Chairman, to evaluate by a way of assessing the infrastructure, human resources, adequately stuffed-libraries, etc, available for the purpose of accrediting them for turning out suitably equipped ordinands. This caused some members of our Committee, who included Rt. Rev. Dr. S.O. Sowale, Rt. Rev. M. O. Akinyemi (later Archbishop), Very Rev. Prof. S.U. Eriwo (Secretary) and myself to visit St. Francis of Assis, Wusasa, (Monday 18 -Wed, 20 July 1994) St. Paul's College, Awka, Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure, Ezekiel College of Theology, Ekpoma, and Crowther Theological College, Okene, at different times. These colleges mentioned above belonged to the Anglican Church denomination up to the time of writing this memoir.

There were other major theological colleges visited which were jointly owned by the Anglican and Methodist Churches. These included Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, and Trinity Theological College, Umuahia. Such union theological institutions inevitably have an exchange of inter-denominational impacts. In some cases, such impacts have enriched trainees' theological knowledge, while in others, arrangements were made to avoid doctrinal confusion. These theological colleges have produced very eminent church leaders who man high offices in public and private places or institutions. Both reports

and recommendations on our findings were submitted to the authorities.

There were known cases of theological institutions like the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Bukuru, Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) Theological Seminary, Igbaja, which trained personnel for the Anglican Church in some parts of the Province. Such personnel however would have had their basic theological ordination training in an Anglican seminary.

In recent years, our country Nigeria has developed immensely and side by side with it was the growth of the Church of Nigeria under her successive visionary leadership. With this synergy, churches in various dioceses have also appreciably increased in numerical strength and with it were churches' uncorresponding production of manpower from the 'factory'. Our common excuse for this collective failure to match our rate of development with our visionary resources and action was, and still is, 'There is no money.'

Diocesan Seminaries

Due to the pressing need for manpower on the part of the church, some dioceses resorted to training private or special candidates. To meet their needs was also enormous on the part of the needy dioceses. An attempt to solve the problem of inadequate manpower has led some heads of churches to found diocesan seminaries with the sole aim of training their candidates privately at diocesan level which was understood to be in the interest of the dioceses so as to combat the shortage of personnel.

The concept of establishing individual diocesan micro-seminaries will turn out to be more expensive than having an enlarged, well-organised, well-staffed formal mega-seminaries

(common parlance). The latter would maximize manpower production than the former. Rehabilitating the formal corporate seminaries, where most of the present church leaders were trained, with modern national or provincial outlook, would do the church more good, than founding isolated, satellite-like seminaries. It would be like overhauling the machinery of manpower production. This would give necessary exposure to the ordinands who are being ordained, not into the diocesan church but to the church universal.

A formal theological college or seminary is a mini-university with lecturers who are at par with university lecturers and are in many advanced countries inter-changeable. They are equally qualified academically to deliver balanced theological education formation which is given on a full-time basis. Seminary lecturers are fully dedicated to training, monitoring, teaching and conducting sermon clinics, evening tutorials, etc. with seminarians at least twice a day. No parish priest who has to do full-time parish work, or even bishop who is fully busy administratively with diocesan work, can hardly find time to regularly lecture in his seminary. But if anyone thinks he can do it better than the formally accredited seminary lecturers, he would do the church of God a world of good by volunteering to join the seminary staff.

Notable is St. Paul's opinion:

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it... If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ... if it is leadership, let him govern diligently..." (Rom. 12:6-8 NIV).

This same Apostle Paul said:

*"And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers..."
(1 Cor. 12:28).*

My fear is that if ordinands who are being so prepared at the rate of one month per annum do not have adequate 'dose' of theological education formation, the end result could be detrimental to the desired future interest of the church. Adequate training is a *sine qua non* to a successful ministry.

More attention with interest should be paid to academic discipline like the study of the text languages (Hebrew and Greek and if possible, German) for proper understanding of theology and to be relevant in the world of scholarly theologians. Fully trained postulants would often feel wary and in actual fact fidget to see in the rank and file of the clergy, those who received their training or earned doctorate degrees from unrecognised institutions. These days, such institutions (with no fixed denomination) award 'higher degrees' to honour cash-donors or people with little or no training at all but who occupy enviable church positions. It develops to resentment when they are preferred before the formally trained ones.

A Right Step to a Desired Goal

It was most gladdening, at my retirement, to know that a Faculty of Religion at the long-conceptualised Language School was started. My impression is that this bold feat by the Most Rev. P. J. Akinola will meet the aspirations of many clergy who are thirsty for sound post-ordination theological education. Very importantly, it will help to stimulate the desire by some to acquire sound theological education, for which our church is noted and respected. By this enviable theological education formation, it is an innovation that we can be proud of and since

there is no substitute for training anyway, our products will match their counterparts anywhere in the world.

Nothing is more desirable than to pursue the knowledge of God, not for self-gratification but to engage the minds of the church of God, to think the thoughts of God which will enable them to fear Him, to serve, obey and love Him and their neighbours, to increase in His grace and favour. It is to prepare all people for the best way of life that will bring joy and salvation to them; like it is stated in a nutshell in St Paul's spiritual responsibility to preach the Gospel. This, no doubt, is God's mind for the economy of salvation for His supreme creation.

Episcopal Election

My election as Bishop of Egba Diocese came in the beginning of December 1994. It was a sharp contrast to my expectation, even though God had revealed it by dream through a nephew, six months before the time. I hardly believed his dream was about me. After all, not all dreams come true, while some visions too are like day dreaming. Some people's dreams however do come true the opposite way.

The questions came repeatedly to my mind, "How would it happen when my tenure as Dean had not ended and would not end until the end of August 1995. Could this little boy have heard or seen a divine revelation?" But if God had spoken, then His voice must be listened to and obeyed with humility.

Exactly six months after the dream, Papa, Bishop Olajide of Ibadan Diocese, sent for me early on St Andrew's Day, Wednesday 30th November, 1994 and delivered to me in his closet, a letter from the Primate, the Most Revd Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye, notifying me of my election. 'Election?' It was all hazy! "Bishop?" It shocked me to the marrow and beyond expression! My mouth was dry; my hands watered instead. Inside the car, I read it again and again.

Episcopal election often generates one of the most shocking, and fast spreading news when it comes. It brings sensational joys that spread like wild fire in Nigeria. Its news spreads faster than the Bishop who is the bearer of the newsletter!

In no time, friends kept pouring into our house from among the chapel members to express goodwill. Who told them? No one talked to us about arrangement or preparation. I too thought little about it and infact, could not imagine the magnitude of its involvement. Worse still, we had no one to share preparation arrangement with. I guess that the case would have been different if I were a parish priest in a well-to-do church.

Unexpected Visitor's Generosity

One Saturday evening, God guided the steps of a man, Engr. C.S.O. Akande to my doorsteps. I knew him before, though not very intimately, but I least expected him as we had not exchanged visits. He came in, congratulated me and asked, "What are you doing about your robes?" "Nothing Sir", I answered. His concern gave me the joy and confidence that there were people thinking about me. I felt so happy and relieved.

Engr Akande was the retired Head of Service for the defunct Western State. He was noted for decency, decorum and discipline. He hated extravagance, wasteful expenditure and outward show. He was humble, kind and ready to support humanitarian cause.

"Go to Chief Rufus Folusho Giwa in Lagos and tell him I asked him to assist you. I will give you a little amount that I can afford," Engr Akande advised. He himself immediately gave me some amount of money, having previously retired from civil service more than ten years past. Through God's inspiration, Chief Giwa in Lagos gladly gave me some amount too.

Chief Rufus Giwa too, was a remarkably generous man. His record of generous donations were recorded both in his parish church, at the diocesan and provincial levels. He was one of the leading supporters of his home church. In appreciation of his selfless services to Ondo State, Akoko Diocese, his St. George's (home) Church, Okeagbe-Akoko, through numerous scholarships to the sons and daughters of his Community, Ondo State Polytechnic in Owo was named after him, and a Model Secondary School in Akoko was also named after him and he was knighted with his wife by the Diocesan Bishop of Akoko, the Rt. Revd. J.O.K. Olowokure.

God surprisingly works through human hearts and hands to perform and fulfil His purpose and plans. No one can doubt that there was this divine personality again, whose hand was at work in moving the hearts and hands of both Engr. Akande and Chief Rufus Giwa to help. How much did they themselves know that they were carrying out God's design to bring hope and assistance to a needy one?

Similar to this occasion was that of time and distant Jos incident when I was appointed Provost. True friends often appear at the time of need to keep in touch. The assurance and encouragement that St Paul gave to the Church in Phillippi was true to my life:

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Phil.4:19).

That was how God wonderfully met my needs beyond my own expectation and understanding. I find it too difficult to take it for granted or dismiss it with a wave of hand as a matter of course.

The Chapel Committee and some individual members also came around to render financial assistance. God used these

kind people to remove the impression from the mind of people that to be sent to lecture in Immanuel College, was to be sent to a 'desert', that is, an isolated, station. But God, in His infinite wisdom turned it to a fertile, 'greenland' that soon became attractive.

In all His wisdom, God began to change this insinuation as from the time He sent me there to work. God being with us, turned Immanuel College to one of the most interesting places to work. God favourably blessed all of us in one way or the other. In terms of promotion, at least ten of us who formed the Team Ministry, both Anglican and Methodist of my generation, were to the glory of God, elevated to the bishopric in succession, beginning with me.

Looking at it from the divine angle, elevations or preferments are used by God to confirm what we taught students that bishoprics should not be seen as objects of contention or a means of enriching oneself materially, rather, they are to serve as instruments of humble service and for advancing His service.

Consecration and Enthronement

Two weeks before consecration, two of us, the Very Rev. Prof Joseph Akin Omoyajowo and myself went with our wives to Oshogbo for a week-long Retreat, led by the Rt Rev. and Mrs. Seth O. Fagbemi, the Bishop of Osun Diocese. Our wives gained from Mrs Victoria Fagbemi's wealth of experience as an elderly Bishop's wife. We too enjoyed sharing scholarly discussion with and drawing experience from the resourceful Bishop Fagbemi. He was exceptionally humble and loving. The Bishop has left a very lasting impression on our minds.

Apart from the Fagbemi's leading our retreat, I have been opportuned, since my undergraduate days, to have very close association with their loving, God-fearing family. Bishop

Fagbemi, a First Class graduate from the University of Ibadan, has been a mentor to me, and his wife, Victoria, a counsellor to my wife. Bishop Seth Fagbemi has affected many lives, including mine by his humility, dedication to duty and the fear of God.

On Sunday February 5, 1995, the Very Rev. Professor Joseph Akin Omoyajowo and myself were consecrated Bishops at a solemn but inspiring service, presided over by the Primate, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye. He was assisted by a host of bishops; the preacher was Rt. Rev. R.N.C. Nwosu of Asaba Diocese.

On Tuesday 7th February, 1995, we bade our beloved College of Theology, staff, students and our dear Chapel members goodbye to embark on another phase of our missionary journey to Egbaland. Under two hours, we and our long procession of followers from Ibadan arrived Abeokuta through the eastern Obantoko axis to a tumultuous welcome of Egba people, one of the greatest crowds of joyful people I have ever witnessed! The procession which doubled from there, headed for the historic Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake, Abeokuta, for the welcome service which was led by Provost James Afolabi Popoola. After the service, we paid a courtesy call on the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Oyebade Lipede. From there, we went to the Bishops court, Onikolobo.

On the following day, Wednesday 8th February, the enthronement service took place. It was attended by Bishops, the Diocesan Chancellor, Chief Akin Delano SAN, the Ogun State Military Administrator, Colonel Daniel Akintonde and many Ogun State traditional rulers, with all the other Egba Obas led by the Alake, the paramount ruler of Egbaland, Oba Oyebade Lipede and many dignitaries.

Our Episcopacy in Egbaland

A Book entitled, “The Episcopacy of The Rt. Rev. Dr. Matthew Oluremi Owadayo (Ph.D)” was written by some kind and good members within and outside the country. It was kindly reviewed by Dr. Reuben Abati (formerly the Editorial Chairman of the Nigerian Guardian Newspaper), later the Information and Media Adviser to President Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of Nigeria. The book was presented by the erudite Professor Biyi Afonja, Chancellor of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State. Nevertheless, God gave me the grace to write my autobiography which includes a fuller account of my ministry which did not begin and end in Egbaland. This is more comprehensive because it includes the massive contributions by my wife and other good people of God whom it has pleased God to use, both in and outside Egbaland, to enrich our lives and ‘Our Ministry’. I regard this as my true autobiography which contains events predating and postdating the ‘Episcopacy’.

I am also aware of the fact that the Book (hereafter referred to as “The Episcopacy...”) was written to surprise, rather than embarrass me, because I did not proofread the draft or even see it at all before it was printed.

I am further aware of the fact that most of the contents of the book were what the writers knew or saw in me. I have no doubt that there might have been some exaggeration. I am however inspired and encouraged by their compliments, like St Paul told his congregation in Corinth:

“Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.”(2Cor.3:5).

We shall eternally be grateful to God who gave us the grace to live and work among the Egba people; we cannot thank enough the Chairman, Vice Chairman and all members of our send-off Committee, the Publication Committee members, Editorial Board members and contributors, etc., who worked willingly to make the book come alive. May all these kind and good people, who sacrificed time, resources –material, intellectual and spiritual, to produce this book, and all who contributed to the success of our ministry one way or another, receive God's favour and remain blessed in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

My Ministry, Our Ministry

God of History

My so-called “Episcopacy” is a contingent part of God’s ministry which is inclusive of my wife’s ministry and also other people’s contributions without which my ministry would be incomplete and impaired, if not totally impossible. So, also talking of my ministry alone would be equally conservatively narrow in perspective. It is more reasonable therefore to write on “Our Ministry.” His ministry is one in which man has been used as the instrument for executing and advancing it from one generation to another in human history.

The writer of Hebrews writes:

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers at many times and in various ways but in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son whom He has set above His (Jesus’) companions by anointing you with the oil of joy” (Heb. 1:1-9).

Jesus is therefore our Great high Priest who has called us to the ministry by the Great Commission that we should “Go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19).

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ said,

"But you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness to His wonderful light" (1Peter 2:9).

The ministry started with God, He initiated it, He called His son Jesus and gave the ministry to Him.

What if when God saw how great man's wickedness on earth had become, the inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time...the Lord was grieved and He decided to wipe mankind from the face of the earth and if He did not spare even Noah, where would the Gospel have been proclaimed? What if when Jesus Christ preached and there were no disciples at all to follow Him and continue with His ministry, where would the churches have come from? What if Samuel Ajayi Crowther had not been enslaved, rescued, educated and returned, would the translation of Yoruba Bible have come into existence? What if Charles Philips, the Apostle of Christianity in Ondo had told the CMS, "I don't think I can continue" when he lost three children to death in succession in a matter of weeks and withdrew. What would have been the fate of Christianity today among the Ondo and their neighbours? Thus, the origin of our ministry began with God Who has called us to have a share in the work of the ministry coming through the generational chain of witnesses.

Ministry in Egba

When God wanted to launch us into the greatest and most exciting phase of our ministry, He guided our feet on a new path of missionary journey to Egbaland. He did not leave us

to it by ourselves, He was with us at every step we took, guiding, upholding and helping us through the precipice, showing us love by saving us from going astray. His promise to teach and instruct the way to go, and even counsel and watch over anyone who believes Him (Ps 32:8) was fulfilled for us.

Egba – The Cradle of Christianity

The story of how the Christian faith reached Nigeria through Badagry axis to Abeokuta is as stimulating as it is told. Its importance does not lie in its serving as gateway to the Faith alone, it is the gateway to innumerable concomitant dividends some of which placed its early recipients in the forefront of education, social, economic and political advancement.

The reader must not however lose sight of the all-important fact that the Faith characteristically was not delivered to Egba people on a 'platter of gold.' It came through the efforts of people who had passed through the 'baptism by fire' – the ex-slaves.

Part of the exciting feelings which I had on reaching Abeokuta was that of the memory of Samuel Ajayi Crowther who worked and lived in Abeokuta a century before. He was one among the heroes of faith whose lives I admired. I heard his story in primary and secondary schools and also read about him in the Seminary and University. He was variously described or defined either as the first black man to become bishop, an ex-slave to become bishop or the man who translated the Holy Bible into Yoruba. Now, I saw and officiated visibly in places where he worked over one hundred years ago! I was most enthused to be opportuned to work there. One of the latest writings on him by Jeanne Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo described him as 'The Miracle of Grace.'

The story of Ajayi Crowther, said Jeanne Decorvet, should stimulate the youth of Africa and inspire their faith to make

Africa great. People who need role models and who are looking for a better tomorrow must be prepared to endure hardship and pass through the refining 'mill of fire.' They must not look for cheap success. To achieve greatness, we must be ready to struggle, work hard and make the necessary sacrifice. Samuel Ajayi Crowther's story brings to mind that when we are maltreated, brutalised, oppressed, cheated and are inhumanly treated by fellow human beings, though no fault of ours, God will soon work out some marvels in our lives and in an extraordinary manner.

One Hymn writer, L.M Willis wrote the hymn,

*Father, hear the prayer we offer:
Not for ease that prayer shall be,
But for strength that we may ever
Live our lives courageously
Not for ever in green pastures,
Do we ask our way to be;
But the steep and rugged pathway,
May we tread rejoicingly.*

Today, the history of Christianity in Nigeria, nay in Africa, would not be meaningfully completed without including the life-history and contributions of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. God sometimes rewards our faithful service with things we cannot measure in monetary values, but ever green memory written in gold among the people with whom we live. So many books have been written on Samuel Ajayi Crowther, his childhood, his enslavement, freedom, ministry and bishopric. Day by day, and with perseverance, patience and trust, we realise how God moulds our lives into a greater likeness of His Son and servants of several generations.

Succeeding Generations

From the time that Henry Townsend and Samuel Ajayi Crowther arrived in Abeokuta in 1846, and the time we started work in Abeokuta in 1995, were years that witnessed the planting and consolidating period of one and a half centuries of the faith in Egbaland which makes it one of the oldest in the country. This has earned Egba the title of “Cradle of Christianity” in the history of the Anglican faith in Nigeria. During this period, the faith has grown and flourished, affecting many lives and every part of our national life has also been impacted by this faith. It has produced giants in education, civil service, politics, judiciary, etc.

The area referred to as Egba-Egbado Diocese when it started grew big enough to give birth to three new dioceses in thirty years. The first four Bishops to serve there were, the Rt. Rev. J. S. Adeniyi (1975-1979); the Rt. Rev. Titus Ilori Akintayo (1980-1994), Rt. Rev. M.O. Owadayo (1995-2009) Egba Diocese. Yewa Diocese was carved out of Egba-Egbado in 1990; Egba West Diocese and Ifo Missionary Diocese were carved out of Egba in 2007, with Rt. Rev. (Engr) Samuel O. Ajani and Rt. Rev. Akin Odejide as their respective Bishops.

As Fellow Workers

I cannot say exactly when the seed of my ministerial career was planted. But I know that along my life journey, through my encounter with people, my experience and my reading of the word of God, His inexplicable instances of revelation to me, the inner promptings, reading about other people’s inspiring life stories, and so on, have contributed to my growth in the faith of Christ.

We see ourselves as being called to a ministry, as co-workers, which means that the ministry basically belongs to God. He gave it to His Son Jesus Christ, Who in turn has given

us grace and by the virtue of Christ's Great Commission to have our share of it. It is not because we are holy or materially rich that He has called us. No, but because of the reason that is best known to His divine wisdom. His call is always most unexpected. Human history is full of pleasant and funny surprises. He called Moses the stammerer instead of Aaron the fluent speaker, to go to King Pharaoh.

In Hebrews (5:4f.) we are told,

"No one takes this honour upon himself, he must be called by God just as Aaron. So Christ did not take upon Himself the glory of becoming a high priest."

But God said to him:

You are my son;

Today I have become your father (Heb. 5:5)

St. Paul himself was aware of the importance of the divine call and so said:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who...have been called according to His purpose...those He predestinated He also called..."(Rom. 8:28,30).

These are very weighty statements made by Paul, he was too conscious of his unworthiness and so he told his Corinthian congregation:

"I am the least of the apostles and do not deserve to be called an apostle..."(1Cor. 15:9).

*Thus, he often wrote in the prefix of his books,
"Paul...called...an apostle by the will of God"
(1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1, etc).*

In a similar spirit of humility and fear of God, we confess our own unworthiness (even after we have done our little bit and retired) to be called to the exalted office of Bishop. We apologise and ask for God's forgiveness for the areas where we fall short of expectation. I have often wondered how and why the unsearchable wisdom of God chose us in our lowliness as He told St Paul:

"He chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong..." (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Why Write after Retirement?

Someone asked me why I would embark upon writing the story of my ministry after retirement when not many people would be as interested in launching it as would have been the case when I was in active service. I told him that he misunderstood my intention and objective which he mistook for a money-spinning venture! It is far from that. Rather, my sworn purpose and ambition is to thank God, my Creator and Saviour, and many people whom God caused to meet us at the cross road of life.

Is it not humbling to find myself at the milestone of fifty years of unbroken church missionary service? As I looked back over seventy years of co-existence and interaction with people of different shades of colour and character, I felt indebted to God and man. It reminded me of the wise saying by Robert Schuller:

"The past is often referred to as history and history not told is past neglected. To neglect the past is not to appreciate what we have as today."

Sophocles also said:

" One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been."

It is my humble way of documenting their kindness and my appreciation of them, whether living or asleep; all who have encouraged or inspired me in life.

My tribute to people like Venerables J. S. Oloniyo, M.A. Olupona, Bishop J. O. Arulefela, Justice (Chief) Owen Fiebai, Chief Tunji Odegbami, Canon J. O. Fagboyegun, Oba Oladele Olashore, Chief Mrs. G. O. Sodipe among others who contributed immensely to my ministry. Even though they have rested in the Lord, my regards to them will not diminish.

Thanks be to God who has brought me from the dominion of darkness to His kingdom of light and for making me a preacher to bring other people to the faith. My thanks to God will not be only in words but will involve my sacrificial gifts. It is my joy to use it to appreciate people who have inspired me by their way of life and whose lives and contributions to the work of God are worthy of emulation. I see some of these men and women as heroes and heroines of faith. Some are mentioned by names while others are not. Many are alive while a very dear one had just slept in the Lord at the time of writing this memoir. But thanks be to God that some today are still doing more, while the children of these righteous and generous ones, who have rested in the Lord or living, are becoming powerful and doing mighty exploits (Ps. 112:2,9).

There are church leaders, traditional rulers, former governors, male and female dignitaries whom I have referred to and with whom I have lost contact. Some, over fifty years ago! It is far from currying favour. As it is often said, people's "good deeds are interred with their bones."

It reminds me of how some elders of the Jews pleaded earnestly with Jesus on behalf of the Centurion whose servant was sick to the point of death, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue" (Luke 7:5).

Jesus, our Lord too appreciated the expression of gratitude by one leper out of the ten who were healed (Lk. 17:17). More importantly, we owe it our sacred duty to let our children know some of the experiences we passed through in our life journeys. I have been much impressed by what an economist, Lord Robbins said and I share same view:

"...My purpose in writing is not to publicise the importance of anything I have done, but rather to interpret and evaluate the experiences I have had in the context of what God has done in my life. I have lived through a period of extensive change, both in the world of thought and the world of affairs; and it has been my good luck to observe some from favourable positions. I have therefore come to think that a candid account of what I have seen and felt may be of some interest to persons other than myself..."

God told Moses to tell the people of Israel to teach their children and grandchildren what they went through:

“so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as they live by keeping all His decrees and commands...”(Deut. 6:2).

In Deut. 6:21, the directive by God to Moses is more explicit “...tell him (your son) we were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...sent miraculous signs and wonders, great and terrible upon Egypt...”. True to the future realisation of the Israelites, their children asked them and they explained to them from one generation to another, what God did in delivering them from Egypt. Up till that time, the passover was celebrated and yearly attended by the sons and daughters of Israel at home and in diaspora. The writer of Proverbs says:

“He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge... a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.”
(Prov. 14:26f)

In the same spirit of bringing up the children in the fear of God, it must go along with the knowledge of God. Children must be made to know what experience their parents went through in their life pilgrimage. If parents were wealthy or poor, children should be informed how they came to be. This would help them to address themselves to certain things or avoid them. This is an effective way of parenting children and caring properly for their future. This ideal way of life can be extended to distant family members too, who are to serve as future guardians and preservers of our Christian values. In the words of the world renowned evangelist, Billy Graham, that we should allow the word of God to guide us, serving as “a

road map, so that our children will find the best route to take and be able to navigate life's twists and turns" for themselves avoiding mistakes.

The faith of our fathers is holy faith and we and our children will be true to it till the end. One way of being faithful to it till the end, is to teach them the basic truth that it did not come to us on a platter of gold. It involved the shedding of the innocent blood of Jesus and the early martyrs. St Paul did not keep it away from the Corinthians how they suffered hardships, they felt in their hearts the sentence of death but God delivered them from deadly peril (2 Cor. 1:8ff). And in the words of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin:

"...For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

We too are living witnesses to what God has done in our lives and in our generation, because in any generation, He has never left Himself without a witness.

Although as Diocesan Bishop and wife, we had Constitutional authority to wield power, we were often conscious of the fact that authority belongs to God. It is a gift from God to administer His church and to be exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As Bishop, one is always aware of the needs of the church and strives to address them. Such needs include teaching which is of vital importance, and part of Christ's Great Commission. Through spiritual enlightenment, he leads the church to be able to take doctrinal decisions in faithfulness to the Gospel.

In our ministry, God enabled us to serve the people to His glory and to strive for excellence. This is what Christianity stands for, to serve as salt and light by bringing quality and honour to God's creation. In Matthew 22:14, we are told, "For

many are invited, but few are chosen''. The history of Christianity is the history of the great moving of God the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of the ordinary men and women, by turning their weakness to strength.

In the life stories of the heroes of faith recorded in Hebrews 11:1-40, we are surprised to read in the last verse:

"God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect," (11:40)

That also reminds us that it is not what we are or what qualities we possess, but what God makes of us. This is why Heb. 12:2 emphasises that our focus should be on Jesus, the symbol of perfection of our faith.

The Gospel of St. John 1:16 states:

"From the fulness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another."

This grace has been the hope and mainstay of all categories of believers in history. Paul, the great apostle was very conscious of the presence of this grace in his ministry, when he said:

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect" (I Cor. 15:10).

Paul declared one basic truth that is fundamental to a successful ministry:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2Cor. 12:9).

God makes this grace available to all believers indiscriminately from generation to generation.

A Surprise Visit by a Celebrity

Within a short time after our arrival in the Diocese, God brought people from different places to meet us, people whom God would use in one area or the other of our ministry. We were surprised and really astonished at the number of such people whose visits or calls came with encouragement and confidence.

One of the most surprising of such visits was paid by Chief Dr. E. A. O. Shonekan, GCFR, CBE, former Head of State whose steps God guided all the way from Lagos to us one afternoon. His visit shocked me to the extent that I was forced to say, "Yes Sir?." He humbly and quickly understood and answered,

"My Lord Bishop, I am here to welcome you to Egba Diocese and to assure you of our support. I pray that God will be with you and your family, I wish you a successful tenure. You are heartily welcome."

To that brief but needed prayer by a one time number one citizen of the country, I said, "Amen."

That was truly a hearty prayer from a very reserved, highly dignified personality who meant and emphasized every word of his prayer. This contact formed the humble beginning of my personal encounter with one of the most humble, deeply religious, unassuming and God-fearing man I have been opportuned to associate with in the course of my episcopal ministry.

Seventeen years after my first meeting with Chief Dr. Ernest Shonekan and interacting at inter-personal, diocesan and provincial levels, I could look back to see him as a man who was full of good human relations, a committed Christian of the Anglican, faith both at home in Egba, in Lagos and in the United Kingdom. He maintained the public figure of a gentleman, detached from our rough political life.

After Chief Shonekan's departure from me that day, I began to reflect over his nature and following his re-appointment later as our Diocesan adviser on investment, he made himself available, despite his many onerous state duties from which he could not easily be detached. He served faithfully and contributed immensely to the economic development of Egba Diocese, thus bringing his 'Vision 2010' experience to bear. There was no Diocesan Synod or other occasion to which he was invited which he failed to honour. His policy was, as a Christian soldier, "Wherever duty calls, do not be found wanting there." Throughout our tenure, the Diocese enjoyed his services in many respects and importantly as the Chairman of the Egba Diocesan Foundation, known as 'LAR' (Lipede-Adebo-Rosiji).

Egba Traditional Rulers' Vital Roles

One of the assets we inherited from our predecessors, the Rt. Rev and Mrs. T.I. Akintayo was his able Administrative Secretary, Rev. Canon (later Venerable) M. Oba Olasode. He meticulously followed Egba traditional protocol in the roster he prepared for our official visits to key personalities who were often referred to as the hub, holding together the reins of societal cohesion.

Among the first set of people we visited were the traditional rulers. The first among them was the Alake, the paramount ruler of Egbaland, Oba Dr. Oyebade Lipede I. It

took place at the large hall of the palace with the Chiefs of various ranks in attendance. It reminded one of the visit by early missionaries and the grand traditional reception often accorded important dignitaries at their maiden visits.

Second was Oba Dr. Adedapo Tejuosho, the Osile of Oke-Ona Egba, who in a similar setting welcomed us with his chiefs in attendance. Oba Dr. Dapo Tejuoso was of the African Church by faith, while his queen-mother, Mrs. Bisoye Tejuoso was a prominent member of St. Jude's Anglican Church, Ebute Meta, Lagos. Customarily, Egba indigenes and their traditional rulers attended different church denominations and were mixing indiscriminately.

The Third was Oba Dr. Olawale Adisa Odeleye, the Olowu of Owu, Egba, who was a Baptist. The fourth was Oba Lalidu Sobekun, the Agura of Gbagura, Egba, who was though a muslim, attended and worshipped at the Holy Trinity Church, Gbagura, on special occasions, including his coronation anniversary. Also was Oba Jacob Omolade Lafa II, the Olubara of Ibara, Egba, of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Ibara.

Arrangements were also made by Canon Oba Olasode for us to visit the following highly placed men and women Christian chiefs:

- (i) The Balogun of Egba Christians, Chief Olufemi Adewumi
- (ii) The Iyalode of Egba Chief, Mrs. Bisoye Tejuoso, the mother of Oba Dr. Adedapo Tejuoso In Lagos.
- (iii) The Iyalode of Egba Christians, Chief Mrs. E. O. Edun.
- (iv) The Iyaloja of Egba, Chief Mrs. Ogunbanke, she was the Iya Ijo of St. Paul's church, Igbo.

At the time of our retirement, two of the traditional rulers had joined their ancestors and new ones had replaced them. The incumbent monarch at the time of writing was Oba Michael Adedotun Gbadebo, the Okukenu IV, the Alake of Egbaland, while the new Olowu was Oba Dosumu Adegboyega.

The early embrace of Christian faith by successive Egba traditional rulers opened their eyes to the benefits of western education, advantage of commerce, health-care services, technology, etc. These were just a few of many beneficial dividends which followed those who accepted Christian faith as a way of life. The eager welcome of the faith by Egba traditional rulers and chiefs launched Egba into a new lease of life and a rate of progress and civilization.

Along the advent of Christianity in Egbaland, the earliest missionaries, T.B. Freeman, Townsend and Crowther, among others, brought goodwill presents (the Holy Bible, mirror and other gifts) from the Queen of England to Chief Shodeke in 1842 and Chief Segbua his successor in August 1846 respectively. But the nascent faith soon encountered persecution by the traditional religionists. Between 1843 and 1845, first and second visits of the missionaries, Chief Shodeke, seen as strong supporter of the new faith, was poisoned by the antagonists - the Ifa traditional adherents.

Over the years, Christianity has impacted every phase of Egba life through Abeokuta Grammar School founded in 1908, and many other schools which have produced thousands of Egba indigenes over the past one hundred years. Fortunately, most, if not all of the traditional rulers, chiefs and community leaders were products of Abeokuta Grammar School and were proud adherents of the Christian faith.

The Alake of Egba, Oyebade Lipede had become a legend in the history of the adherents of Christian faith in Egbaland before he 'joined his ancestors' at the ripe age of ninety. He

was one of the most humble, God-fearing, highly respected monarchs I met in my ministry. He was a heavy financial and material donor to the Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake. He was known for punctuality at services and at public occasions.

At one of Oba Oyeade Lipede's anniversary services, the Most Rev. P. J. Akinola preached and launched the Oba Oyeade Lipede Evangelistic Mission (OOLEM) which was saddled with the responsibility of propagating the gospel to remote areas of the Diocese. It was well supported with many people's donations of money and motorcycles. The Ogun State Governor, Chief Olusegun Osoba, the Primate and some attendants generously donated motorcycles and cash for the purpose of running the evangelistic mission. Chief Alaba Lawson, a lover of evangelism, was appointed Treasurer, Olori Bimpe Lipede (an accountant) was a member of the Committee, the Provost, Very Rev. Professor A. D. Akinde (later Bishop) was Chairman, the Diocesan Registrar, Chief Tayo Falode was Vice Chairman. The OOLEM greatly boosted evangelism and church planting.

Oba Lipede yearly sent goodwill message to Diocesan Synod; he particularly emphasized the factor of evangelism which he was ready to do everything possible to support and advance its cause.

A new Alake of Egbaland, Oba Michael Adedotun Gbadebo, Okukenu IV and his consort Olori Dr. Tokunbo Gbadebo (nee Odunjo) had recently ascended the throne of his ancestors before our retirement. He too, like his predecessors, immediately demonstrated his support for God's work by inviting his brother-Obas to make donations to complete the roofing of the Anglican Church at Boodo. He generously donated chairs and cash towards the completion of the multi-purpose hall. The new Alake did not hide his appreciation for the building of the Hall, even though he had

not ascended the throne when the building started. At his arrival, he showed interest in the project.

Oba Michael Adedotun, as soon as he ascended the throne, built a Clinic within the premises of the Cathedral at the time of Provost A.D. Akinde and equipped it for the use of Cathedral members and the public. This kind gesture was a Christ-like humanitarian act of service. Being a young and dynamic ex-military educationist, Oba Adedotun was tirelessly going from church to church to mix and worship with members and within a short time had endeared himself to the hearts of Egba people and the church of God at large. Under his leadership, he mobilised all Egba traditional rulers to attend our Diocesan Synod, held at Ikereku Holy Trinity Church, in 2007; whereby God gave us the opportunity to enjoin them to be missionaries assigned by God to use their exalted offices to evangelise. God used Kabiyesi Adedotun Gbadebo to bring all the Obas in Egba together to attend Synod for the first time –after many years that Christian leaders had been trying to reconcile them.

I saw Oba Michael Adedotun Gbadebo as a man whom God had prepared for the throne because he was guided by God to live with God-fearing people like Rev. (later Archbishop) J. A. Adetiloye while the latter was a lecturer in Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, and the former was in Ibadan Grammar School for his Higher School Certificate course. Knowing this to be his background, one does not wonder therefore that he toed the line of evangelism. Thus, the spirit of our Synod theme that year – “We Are Called To Be Missionaries” met the pleasure and warm acceptance of all the Obas led by Oba Michael Gbadebo.

The Oshile of Oke-Ona too, a prominent traditional ruler, was a product of Abeokuta Grammar School (AGS). He was a medical doctor before his coronation. He had renounced secret cult membership and had become a born-again evangelist. He

also had an Evangelistic Mission, organising crusades and sponsored revival services on many occasions. He, though an African Church member was often indiscriminately responsive to any Anglican invitation, or request. He came to address Anglican Synods on invitation. He gladly donated to our Diocesan projects and our youth activities.

The Olowu too, who was a Baptist, also happily supported my ministry. The Agura was a muslim but he had often celebrated his coronation anniversaries in his palace or in the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Gbagura, inviting me to preach. He was our regular admirer who honoured every Anglican invitation.

The Olubara, Oba Jacob Omolade, Lafa II, was a die-hard member of St. Andrew's Church, Ibara. A retired permanent secretary, Oba Omolade and his Olori were humble, loving and God-fearing couple who were regular members of the Church. The Oba had openly rebuked and disparaged membership of cult groups among his chiefs. He keenly supported church ministry, hated church politics or any issue that could bring division to the church of God.

Oba Festus Makinde, the Olu of Igbein had recently joined other traditional rulers in Egbaland before our retirement. He was a member of St. John's church, Igbein, and a friendly, and respected ruler. He was a kind and a keen supporter of Youth Organisations. The Oba strongly favoured and advised economic empowerment of the church, himself having been in business before he ascended the throne.

One praise-worthy thing the traditional rulers in Egba together with their Ogun State counterparts introduced, was to set apart a day of praise, when all the Obas came to sing praises to God and to pray and dance together. It was often led by ministers of God with Evangelist Ebenezer Obey's musical band in place to render precise songs. This trend started

in the era of the former State Governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, who encouraged the traditional rulers to be outreaching.

The influence of traditional religious rites has continued to trail the lives and reigns of the rulers in Egbaland like many other places in Nigeria. The traditional rulers did not find it easy to 'wriggle' themselves out of the claim of the traditionalists who sought their attention and support for their traditional rites.

In recent years, there have been hot public debate as to whether traditional rulers should be accorded full Christian burial after joining their ancestors, according to the tenet of their religion, or whether the traditionalists should have a part to play.

Christianity, a subtle but conquering religion, is the 'faith of our fathers' that conquered and acquired the language and other property of the Greek, Syriac, the Roman cultures, etc., to enrich itself. Its demands are 'absolute and total loyalty' on its adherents for the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. It has never spared impacting the nobility and the royal, who under strict religious influence are divested of their exalted pleasurable positions to live happily among plebeians. Faith humbles every true believer.

At the said state-organised debate which took place in the centenary hall, Ake-Abeokuta, under the chairmanship of the Speaker, Ogun State House of Assembly, Hon. Titi Oseni, some religious leaders (both Christian and Muslim) presented papers, advocating autonomy for the Obas to decide their choice burial rites and final place of rest. They pleaded for them because the Church leaders and Imams were not only 'fathers-in-God' to the traditional rulers, whom they loved and respected and with whom they had laboured for the Gospel, but more importantly, because the traditional rulers' subjects were itching with uncomfortable silence as they would ask their traditional rulers, who were also the repositories and custodians of the faith of our fathers.

Synods and their Themes

1995 Synod Theme: Evangelism

Historically, the Synod is the highest policy making body for the church in any area. The Diocesan synod customarily functions in this capacity to administer the churches within the Diocese between one synod and another. Themes are topics chosen for synod to sensitise delegates and the entire community to prayerfully meditate and deliberate on. As the conscience of the nation, the church serves as the salt and light to preserve it, guide and guard it from the darkness of the world. Such themes are often used to reflect the spirit, hopes and aspirations of the Diocese or nation, and they are tailored towards advancing the course of evangelism and enhancing their objectives.

For our first Diocesan synod, the Holy Spirit led us to choose 'evangelism' as our theme. It is no doubt a wide subject, which was intended to create awareness among the churches that this is the cardinal reason for the existence of the church, church institution and in fact for every believer. What wings are to the eagle is what evangelism is to the church. As an eagle cannot fly without wings, so can a church not thrive and survive without evangelism.

At the end of the synod, it was resolved that evangelism be stepped up in every church in the Diocese. Youth organizations (EFAC, Anglican Youth Fellowship, etc.) were mobilized to go to revive the remotely located and weak churches every weekend. As from this synod, a new vista for evangelism pervaded the entire Diocese. The synod further resolved that regular revival services, night vigils, crusade, etc. should be held monthly in every church. This infused into the church a new lease of life, whereby, all members of synod sought to support evangelism in their churches.

Oath of Allegiance to Christ

At the thanksgiving service to round off the synod, I stood out, holding the Holy Bible before the large Cathedral congregation to swear to the Oath of Allegiance to Jesus Christ and non-membership of secret cult or society. After this, I caused all clergy and lay-synod delegates to do the same. There was however, room for anyone who was a member to renounce his/her membership, though no one showed up. I called emphatic attention of members and the congregation to part of the Oath which says, "...if I go back on this Oath, I put myself under the wrath of God..."

At the closing formalities of synod, the Hon. Chancellor of the Diocese, Chief Akin Delano, (SAN) made a very inspiring speech of appreciation of the Bishop's mature and impressive conduct of synod session. He commended particularly the Bishop's charge in very cheering and glowing tributes.

Education – A Veritable Tool for Evangelism

1995, which was our first year was very busy and hectic for us to translate our hopes and aspirations into action. From the beginning of Christianity, church planting has been invariably

followed by the planting of school, as a twin-sister. Customarily, that was the avowed practice of the church followed strictly by early missionaries. As soon as Townsend and Crowther with Gollmer stopped over in Badagry for six months, they built a mission station and a school before coming to Abeokuta. On getting to Abeokuta, part of their manifesto was to found schools for their children to receive good education. This was most winsome to the people.

Similarly, we were very enthusiastically excited when we learnt that one late Chief Omolaja Sodipo of the Holy Trinity Church, Ikereku-Olona, left some amount in his will, which after litigation remained about two million naira endowment fund for the Diocese of Egba, and it was purposely for education. Fortunately, the litigation had just been resolved in favour of the Diocese on our arrival as a result of which God enabled us to swing into action at once.

At our first Diocesan Board's meeting, with the consent of the meeting, I appointed Dr. Japhet A.O. Sofolahan, a renowned educationist and retired permanent secretary, humble, gentle and ready to work, as chairman of a Steering Committee for a new school to be named after philanthropist Omolaja Sodipo. Dr. Sofolahan was the protagonist for the 6-3-3-4 Education system for Nigeria. We appointed others like Chief Dr. Akin Majekodunmi, also a renowned British trained surgeon, and a lover of education, Comrade Jare Adefemi, a retired National Union of Teachers (N.U.T) Secretary for many years, among others, to serve on the Committee. Thus we had people of wide range of experience and knowledge, whose rich resources we could tap to start the running of the College.

The Committee did so well that it metamorphosed to a Board of Governors in October 1995 when the school took off with about sixteen students in Form One. We christened the School, 'OMOLAJA SODIPO MEMORIAL ANGLICAN

SCHOOL' (OSMAS) in memory of our benefactor whose goodwill translated our dream to reality.

Right from the start, the school enjoyed the advantage of being headed by seasoned Christian principals. First was Chief Sodeinde, followed by Chief J. A. Paseda and then the first woman Principal Mrs. O. O. Masominu. They were dedicated and hardworking teachers with interest to showcase the school as a model. The school made astounding progress with increasing fame under the administrative headship of these Principals. It soon became one of the best choice secondary schools with regularly and successively recorded excellent results in Ogun State.

Some of the students made distinctions almost in all subjects in the West African School Certificate Examinations (WAEC). One of the products who read Pharmacy later graduated with a First Class from a reputable University. Many of them furthered their education in various universities outside the country. Before our retirement in 2009, the students' population had reached over 500, male and female.

Nursery/Primary School

Mrs. E. O. Owadayo too, being an educationist by profession, and Diocesan President for women's organisations, mobilised the women members of the Diocese to raise a strong Nursery and Primary school for feeding OSMAS. The population of the school soon rose to 200 before our retirement, with Mrs Oderinde, a graduate teacher as Headmistress. The two institutions were close to each other, sharing the same premises within the Bishop's court. OSMAS and the Nursery/Primary School soon became model schools that attracted the interest of the community, providing the parents the opportunity to quickly and conveniently drop off their wards on their way to places of work, leaving them to the safe-keeping of the staff and wardens.

Lock-up Shops

The presence of these model institutions also informed the women organisations to establish forty lock-up shops nearby, which in no time turned the place to a mini-market, serving the economic need and aspiration of Oluwo village. Turning out pupils of good character and learning was not the only dividend, the factor of their proximity brought incalculable joy and stress-free benefits. The staff and students of OSMAS, Bishop's court community and Oluwo Village did not have to go far to get their needs.

God used Chief Omolaja Sodipo's generous endowment to the Diocese to exemplify the ministry of giving, the product of which is OSMAS, a symbol of pride and inspiration, not only to the Diocese itself, but to the entire Ogun State. Some of the children of the benefactor were known to have expressed satisfaction and great pleasure at the sight of the school.

Nation's Co-Builders

St. Paul the apostle instructed his son in the Lord, Timothy thus:

"I urge then first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim2:1-2)

The President, State Governors, the Police, the Armed Forces, Traditional Rulers, civil administrators, civilians, clergy, etc., all have something in common; the welfare of one and all. The entire multitudes of leaders in the secular and religious sectors are there in a bid to see the world governed so as to live in peace, instead of war, in love instead of hate, in freedom and liberty instead of slavery, in the fear of God and

of courage, in justice instead of injustice, in righteousness instead of sin, in plenty and wealth instead of want and poverty, in health instead of sickness.

Our missionary journey and functions in Egbaland usually referred to as our 'episcopacy,' spanned the tenures of three military administrators and two democratically elected civilian governors. They were respectively Col. Daniel Akintonde, Wing Commander Sam. Ewang, Comdr. Kayode Olofinmoyin, Chief Segun Osoba, and Otunba Gbenga Daniel. During their tenures, I was the Chairman of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) for the Western Area, the Chairman for Egba Zonal Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Vice-Chairman till 2006.

By the virtue of my holding these offices and also as the most senior Diocesan Bishop by consecration, I was for most of the time in the nerve-centre of inevitable rapport between the Church and State. And because our Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake, Abeokuta, being the first and oldest church in Ogun State, and with Abeokuta as the state capital, the Cathedral strategically and centrally placed, with her impressive simplicity in architectural design, provided a serene attractive atmosphere of hallowed ground for worship without discrimination or denominational bias. The Cathedral was wisely accepted by all Governors for state and private services. As the mother-church, she was as busy as a bee-hive. We accommodated ministers from other churches and Dioceses indiscriminately to lead services together in the spirit of team-work in ministry. Apart from state services like the Independent Anniversary, Armed Forces Remembrance Day, special thanksgiving services marking royal birthdays, coronation anniversaries, etc. often attracted important dignitaries from far and near. Such occasional services gave me the opportunity of calling the attention of the government to the deplorable conditions of

social, economic, political ills and educational imbalance with under-developed potentials. There were cases where government took immediate remedial action as a result of our criticism.

The military regime was known to be less tolerant of criticism in some parts of the country, though we did not experience that in Ogun State. A brother Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Awelewa Adebisi, then in Owo Diocese, narrated his experience with a military administrator of Ondo State, who got angry with the Bishop's address during service and quickly showed it. The Bishop, a known social critic, and an outspoken freedom fighter hurt the administrator by his sermon while the latter turned less tolerable to what could have been of great advantage to his administration if taken in good faith. The Press was too ready to report such sensational news, and of course, the issue formed the headlines of the front page the following day.

In 1997, we received the Ogun State Military Administrator's invitation to go to Abuja to pray for Nigeria at the instance of the Head of State, General Sani Abacha. The whole world knew that the latter was only using prayer gimmicks to sell the products of his power politics. Nigeria then, a broken nation, was in travail. It was in the heat of military cum civilian power-politics, when we were searching for leadership, for focus and the national reconciliation was at stake, that its unity was on the verge of collapse. I did not believe that the Abuja prayer request to which Christian and Muslim leaders were invited, was not a mockery, a camouflage. Neither did I believe that the prayers said in Abuja would be more efficacious than those said either in Abeokuta or in all other state capitals.

As the Ogun-State CAN Vice-Chairman (to the Chairman, Bishop J.O. Ajulo), I told the Military Administrator when it was time for me to give vote of thanks that "I would not go to

Abuja because if our hands were not full of blood, God would hear our prayers even if said in Ogun-State or elsewhere.” Everybody including the Administrator was shocked that I said it openly, and I did not go anyway. But who did not know that people were being fooled because ‘Abuja Prayer Call’ was a fake and a failure. After all, God cannot be mocked, whatever a man sows, he will reap.

The last Military Administrator to Ogun State was Commdr. Kayode Olofinmoyin, who gladly honoured our invitation personally to address the Synod on Friday April 30, 1999. He was humble, understanding and close to the people. He handed over the rein of government to the civilian Governor Segun Osoba on May 29, 1999.

Transition to Civil Rule

Governor Segun Osoba, an indigene and the Akirogun of Egbaland, was popularly elected as the first civilian governor, following the long and boring military rule. A very jovial, cheerful and much loved man by the people, his relationship with the Church was equally cordial. Chief Segun Osoba was the first civilian governor I interacted with during my tenure as Diocesan Bishop. He had a tough time with Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) branch in Ogun-State civil service who went on strike over the government’s refusal to pay the then new minimum wage. Governor Segun Osoba was approachable and listening, but would not easily yield. He however reconciled with them after a long strike, followed by intervention and appeal from the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Oyebade Lipede and myself. More is said below about Governor Osoba’s role and substantial contributions he made to Egba Diocese as an illustrious member.

Governor Otunba Gbenga Daniel (OGD) too was listening and considerate. He showed tolerance to criticism and he was always ready to listen to people's agitations. On one occasion at the national independence anniversary thanksgiving service, I seriously criticised government for not providing necessary facilities in Sokenu Hospital. I referred to an incident when I rushed a patient to Sokenu State Hospital, Abeokuta, at 8pm. The hospital was in total darkness; while the doctor on duty had to look for someone to buy candle for him to examine and prescribe medicine for the patient. In my address, I urged the government to improve service condition of the hospital, particularly in a bid to provide regular electricity in the hospital located in the heart of Abeokuta, the Ogun-State capital. After the service, Governor Gbenga Daniel said humbly, "My Lord Bishop, thank you very much for your sermon." He went straight to Sokenu Hospital, called the Medical Director and Nurses on duty, turned his mobile phone to speaker and called me to listen when I was on my way home. He asked them:

"Don't you have a standby generator?"

"Yes sir, we do," I heard them answer.

"Who bought it for you?" The Governor asked.

"The Governor did, sir," they said in unison.

"Why wasn't it on when Bishop Owadayo brought a patient that night?" OGD asked.

"Because we had no fuel," the staff answered.

Then the Governor in turn asked,

"My Lord Bishop, can a hospital not generate fund to buy fuel for running a generator? After buying a new generator for the Hospital, must I continue to supply them fuel to run it?"

“No, not at all, Your Excellency,” I answered. “The Hospital should be able to generate fund to run or maintain the standby-generator.” I owed the governor an apology.

My wife was sitting by me, listening to the discussion. On getting home, I phoned to thank him for his patience and for tolerating my lack of total knowledge of the existing situation. Then I began to wonder why this man was so calm and unperturbed by my criticism from the pulpit!

Governor OGD (as he was fondly called) proved himself so trustworthy to the people, he was so humble and loving. Another thing OGD did, which registered him so dearly to many people’s hearts was how he built new houses for tenants whose houses were affected by the demolition of houses along Abeokuta-Sagamu expressway to give way to the road-dualization exercise.

Return of Schools to Original Owners

When the members of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Ogun State Chapter, who, as stakeholders, had seen the good old days of education in the country saw how the standard of education had deteriorated, not only in Ogun-State but generally in the country. It was no more receiving prime attention without which our dream of egalitarian society would be unattainable, they applied to Ogun-State Governor to return schools to original owners. The governor appreciated the collaboration between the government and the Church in the colonial days and after and for continuing to provide and maintain this high quality education. As a major stakeholder, the Church would be willing to contribute to the improvement of the awful situation of schools in the State. He did not feel bad but after studied consideration for about two to three years, he ordered Prof. Awolusi, his Commissioner for the Ministry of Education, to work out the modalities for the return.

After series of meetings by Church and private school proprietors with the Commissioner, the latter, on behalf of the state government, agreed to release some of the schools to their original owners. It was most encouraging and hope-raising for many church members that before our retirement, some schools had been returned to their original owners.

Being a lover of education with quality, himself a civil engineer by profession, Governor Gbenga Daniel fervently believed and supported the move that the church ought to hold a stake in their children's education. He loved education with quality but would not tolerate the presence of charlatan education-promoters who were exploiting parents who sent their children to school.

Governor Daniel had a unique love and reverent respect for the church of God and His ministers. He was generous to churches and mosques, by supporting some of their poor members on pilgrimage. He sponsored and encouraged local government councils to sponsor both Christian and Muslim pilgrims on pilgrimage. He saw this as a means to enlightenment, education and deepening their knowledge of their faith.

The Legal Year Service

The annual Legal Year service was one of the most colourful services which afforded me the opportunity of reminding and addressing Judges, Lawyers and other Judiciary workers every year of their delicate duties to God and the nation. God used this service every year to make me meet highly placed personalities in the Judiciary in Ogun-State: the High Court Judges, Lawyers and all categories of workers in the Ministry of Justice as they were led by the Chief Judge of the State to begin their new year in the fear of God and rededicate themselves with their offerings at the altar.

This reverent service helped to remind the judiciary workers of the uniqueness of their ministry in the life of our nation and therefore they should show high standard of morality, transparency and justice. The Judges and Lawyers too were admonished to eschew bribery and corruption, which had formed the bane of our national backwardness.

At the time of writing this memoir, the rate of corruption was on the increase as a result of which a former Federal Minister of Education and an ex-Vice President (Africa) World Bank, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili described it 'as a cancer that had pervaded the entire system of governance, including the three arms of government' (*Sunday SUN* Newspaper of March 31, 2013).

When we first arrived in the Diocese, the Hon. Justice Isaac B. Delano was the Chief Judge of Ogun State. He was a very humble, erudite, christian Judge. Following his retirement, Hon. Justice Somolu acted for sometime as Chief Judge. He was soon replaced by Hon. Justice Oluremi Jacobs who was still the Chief Judge when we retired. Justice Jacobs was another humble and God-fearing Judge who mobilized the judiciary workers for service and rededication. It was most rewarding for all to go to the Lord for guidance and direction at the beginning of every new year.

The lawyers were particularly urged to heed God's instruction to "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; and maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed" (Ps.82:3). They are further ordered to, "Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Ps. 82:4).

God also sent His message to Judges and Lawyers, and our entire nation that we are passing through evil times. Ps. 12:11 says, "Help Lord, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men" Prov. 17:23 – "A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of Justice."

Ex. 23:8 – “Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.”

God has rewards and blessings for all who abhor corruption and bribery; who have clean hands; they will ascend the mountain or hill (altar) of the Lord... (Psalm 24).

Various Prongs of Evangelism

Our episcopal ministry in Egbaland was boosted by the contributions from collective and individual people who gladly associated with us and identified with our aspiration for intensive evangelism at all levels. As soon as people realized that we had a laudable vision for evangelizing, they immediately rallied round to support us. Everyone was ready to be involved and provide required resources for launching it.

Impressive First Outing

On my first outing to Lagos for the CSS Bookshop meeting, at the premises of Archbishop's Palace, Marina, I met two people whom God guided to cross my way. Like Bezalel and Oholiab, who were filled with the Spirit of God, with ability, skill and knowledge, Professor Engr. Arc A.B.O. Soboyejo, an Egba indigene who was a distant parishioner, and Prince (later Oba) Samuel Oladele Olashore of Iloko Kingdom, were also annointed by God. The latter was the Chairman of the said meeting. Arc. Soboyejo introduced himself to me; he was jovial, humble with warm affection and full of humour and laughter. He arranged for me a snappy reception and pledged his support for my administration.

Arc. Soboyejo was a member of the Holy Trinity Church, Ikereku, Abeokuta. Son of a late Andrian who died while he was the organist at the Holy Trinity Church, Ebute-Ero, Lagos, the church which gave little Alfred Soboyejo scholarship from Primary through secondary in Igbobi College, Yaba, Soboyejo thence showed avid interest for church service.

As an Architect, he designed free of cost, the Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake-Abeokuta, one of the most imposing modern architectural church-designs in Nigeria. The spiritual, moral and financial contributions made by him, became enshrined in the history of the Diocese. Professor Shoboyebo was till I retired, our Diocesan Architect-emeritus, making his professional advice available to us from America.

From the CSS Bookshop meeting, chaired by Prince (later Oba) Samuel Olashore, I was personally inspired by the role that he played to salvage the establishment. Oba Olashore was a lay member whom God raised to prove that the life of every believer is hidden in God to manifest His purpose, even though he faces fair and stormy weather of life.

Having heard how Prince Olashore reshaped the decaying CSS Bookshop, an eminent jurist, Hon. Justice Kayode Eso (rtd) wrote that Oba Olashore's unique phenomenon was his complete resignation and total belief in God. He, Oba Olashore, saw his selection and elevation to the throne, his denial of position of chief executive of First Bank, as the will of God. Because of his total submission to the will of God, he was appointed Federal Minister of Finance in the Federal Executive Council – a greater position than the bank executive. Realising his forthrightness, God-given skill, combined with the wisdom and the fear of God, Archbishop J.A. Adetiloye appointed him Administrator of the CSS Bookshop which he turned around from the depth of insolvency to a state of buoyancy. About that time, God again rewarded him by being awarded "Excellence" as the "Banker of the Year."

Kabiyesi Oba Olashore wrote his report on the distressed CSS Bookshop in his own words:

“...The affairs of (the Bookshop) which were left at the mercy of fraudulent, ungodly, greedy, selfish, reckless and wholly irresponsible management... The rottenness engulfed the establishment from the highest paid to the least paid messenger.”

This noble Prince had observed and described the situation impeccably. This is a fight against corruption by a layman. Oba Olashore said emphatically that he knew that Archbishop Adetiloye had appointed him because God wanted to use him for a purpose. By December 1995, all inherited debts were repaid, relationships with suppliers restored, business commenced and all board members were proud to witness the turn around that had taken place in the establishment.

Oba Samuel Olashore’s services to the church and his personal modest life have many valuable lessons to teach all and sundry, both in the church and nation. He attributed everything in his life to the grace and will of God— including his group of companies, his international school and the church he built, all to the glory of God. His, is a true testimony of a life of faith that is worthy of emulation. One would be wondering today how people quickly forget the lessons God is teaching us that avarice is detrimental to a healthy economy. No one can read Oba Olashore’s autobiography, and fail to be inspired or have a new attitude to life. The Bible says:

‘For as a partridge hatches eggs it did not lay (so) is the man who gains riches by unjust means whichwill desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool.’ (Jeremiah 17:11).

Bible School to enhance Spirituality

When in 1996 God moved us to make 'The Bible And You' and 'Proclamation for Church Growth' our synod theme for that of 1997, little did we know that God was going to use those themes to start new things in the Diocese of Egba and beyond. The synod themes for 1995, 1996 and 1997 were most challenging, stimulating and aggressive in nature for a drive towards evangelism. The Spirit of God completely and convincingly took over, and was moving everyone, everywhere, like a wild fire.

People were ready and anxious to do the biddings of the Holy Spirit. But we observed that something was conspicuously missing – 'Bible Knowledge.' After we had addressed the synod on the 1996 theme, through the episcopal charge and the plenary discussions, the Holy Spirit directed us to start the Diocesan Bible School. We appointed the Cathedral Provost, Very Rev. (later Bishop) James Afolabi Popoola as the Rector of the school. The people had been thirsty for it, the school soon attracted men and women, old and young, from as far places as Ifo, Otere, Owode, and other distant areas of the Diocese. The senior clergy too, readily took up part-time appointments of teaching various subjects.

In no time, many lay members applied themselves so seriously to the study of the Bible that they later became evangelists, Sunday school teachers, lay preachers and even the young ones among them opted for the church lay readership in the church.

Following the election of Very Rev. Popoola as Bishop of Osun Diocese some years later, his successor as Cathedral Provost, the Very Rev. Prof A.D. Akinde, took over the directorate of the school. The number of students increased every year, applicants were admitted from across denominations. There was a considered suggestion that another

year be added for the advanced certificate, which we thought wise in the light of a wave of movements developing around. The products soon formed themselves into a 'Guild of Evangelists', a body that had impacted the life of the Diocese in no small measure. The body, which had seasoned and experienced lay leaders, wielded positive and useful influence in the areas of evangelism, both at the Diocesan and parish levels before we retired. Among their members and products of the school, were professionals like medical doctors, engineers, architects, nurses, graduate teachers and senior civil servants, etc. Some had even opted and were allowed to go for the ordained ministry. One other important thing the school did, was to stem the drift to new generation churches from the Anglican churches which had become a trend, due to the search for greener pasture.

Board of Evangelism

With the growing trend of the spiritual movement discernible everywhere, the need to inaugurate a Board of Evangelism, to organise all activities related to evangelism arose. Ven. Victor O. Sotunde, a venerable priest, who was full of the spirit and faith, who presented Bible to me on behalf of the Diocese at my enthronement, was appointed Chairman, with Mr. Gad Sobowale, a dynamic layman, as Vice-Chairman, the latter was a civil servant and a very faithful, proactive youth leader. With Ven. Sotunde fully engaged with pastoral duties, we made Mr. Sobowale chairman.

Soon, Mr. Gad Sobowale indicated his burning desire to go to the Seminary for ordination course, for which we readily, without hesitation, recommended him. In his place, we appointed another spiritually charged layman, Dr. Kunle O. Ogun as permanent secretary. The latter however chose to be vice rather than chairman, because of his official responsibility.

Coincidentally, Senior Evangelist Dr. D.O. Ogunseinde arrived from Saudi Arabia. A man who was full of drive, vision and faith. He was energetic and restlessly evangelical; he was popularly appointed chairman and at that time, the Board was changed to Directorate of Evangelism.

Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Ogunseinde, evangelism assumed a dimension that further made it very exciting and interesting. God had often raised men and women to participate actively in our ministry in Egba land. Reports of various sectors of their operation were fully recorded in 'The Episcopacy' published by the Diocese of Egba on our retirement. Other reports which included the Inauguration of the Goodwill Society of Egba Diocese, Launched on 19th Nov. 1995, for the purpose of serving the needs of the poor, were in the mentioned record.

Equipping The Saints: (ETS)

Following our determination to intensify evangelistic activities, we invited the Equipping The Saints World-Wide Ministries (African Mission), whose sole aim was based on Eph.4:12:

"To prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature...fullness of Christ."

The Mission was a renowned body noted for equipping people of God, irrespective of church denominations or class. The Director of Missions, Pastor Robinson A. Oluyemi, led a group of instructors to our Diocese to equip members with their ministries' strategies for evangelising. We first invited all our clergymen to spend a week long activity on this programme.

As servants of God and stewards of the Ministry of the Word of God, St. Paul the apostle said:

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (1 Cor. 4:2).

The course was like a refresher course to make them faithful and true minister who could preach powerfully, courageously and convincingly. All the clergy found the course very interesting and rewarding.

The second group of people to undergo another area of the programme were the laity - the layreaders, and different classes of lay members, etc. It was a good thing to have these lay members present as members of the Great Commission, which included clergy, lay men and women. Some of them were Major-Gen. Olufemi Olutoye, Professor Mrs Olutoye, among others, who came to perform, through the agency of one of our distant members, Chief Mrs E. Asake Ogungbe, the Sakotun of Ikereku Christians and an ardent evangelist.

Sunday Bible School

One fundamental way of guaranteeing the continuity and solidarity of the Church is to accord Sunday Bible School a place of priority. As life has become so crowded with social and other activities on weekdays, the only day left of the seven in the week, is Sunday. This has become the only available time used for Sunday Bible School, where children avail themselves of the instructions to make them God-fearing and people-loving citizens.

Teachers who would teach them therefore, must themselves live exemplary lives. They had the sacred duty of redeeming and remoulding souls for eternity. We had Rev. (later Ven.) E.O. Olajide, Rev. J.O. Sofoluwe and Evangelist Mrs. A.O.

Oridota; they were people used by God, and who gladly prepared a new generation of future men and women in Christ as genius of His gospel.

Children Evangelism Ministry is an important ministry by which the church can cause the children to be well grounded in the elementary rudiments of the faith. Any church that fails to attach importance to this runs the risk of divine displeasure – after all, the kingdom of God belongs to them (Mk. 10:14).

Importance of Youth Ministry

There were many other areas where we explored opportunity to evangelise among boys and girls. These included the ‘concern for special groups,’ fully recorded in the ‘Episcopacy...’ mentioned. Some of them were the Boys Brigade and Girls Guild, notably supervised with zest, by Ven. E.O. Sodipe, Mr. and Mrs. Akinbode of St. Mary’s Church, Ijaye, Mr. Kunle Afolabi, Mr. Goke Adekunle of Holy Trinity Church, Gbagura, among others, other areas include Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF), EFAC, CYC, ministry to the Sick and the Prison.

The contributions made by the leaders, especially Senior Evangelist Dr. D.O. Ogunseinde and Mr. Rotimi Oyenekan and other members mentioned earlier, and those too numerous to mention groups of fellowships, to the success of our ministry in Egbaland, can never be appreciated enough. The joy of it all was that we were co-workers under the common banner of Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. We decided not to include detailed reports of the various ministries we initiated to advance evangelism, because they had been fully recorded in ‘The Episcopacy of The Rt. Rev. M.O. Owadayo by Egba Diocese.’

Carnival 2000 for JESUS

In January, 2000, the Diocese of Egba began the new year with a spate of evangelistic activities. First among them was termed 'Carnival 2000 for Jesus,' towards which we had made comprehensive arrangements since the end of the previous year. It was scheduled for Saturday 8th January, to usher in the 21st century.

One man who made unforgettable efforts, and whom God raised to arrange all that it took to bring into successful reality the '2000 Jesus Carnival,' was Chief E.O. Idowu, an ex-Police Commissioner. Chief Idowu, popularly known as 'Chief Abaren' (business name) secured Chief S.A. Akinremi's long trailer vehicle, had it colourfully decorated and brought to the Bishops court, Onikolobo, for us to ride to Ake Palace grounds.

Most surprisingly, notable elderly dignitaries joined us for the marathon trailer-ride to the Cathedral. Among the members of our crew were Hon. Justice J.A.O. Sofolahan, the Baba Ijo of St. Paul's church, Igbore, Hon Justice Owolabi Kolawole (rtd Diocesan Chancellor) who was also the Baba Ijo of St. Andrew's Church, Ibara, Chiefs (Drs) Femi and Dotun Oyewole, riding through the heart of the ancient city of Abeokuta, in a long procession of trailer and other motorcade. It presented a very impressively exciting sight that attracted sensation and applause from the cheering crowds of observers and admirers! The procession was covered by the newspapers, radio and television.

At Ake Palace venue were the Ogun State Governor, Chief Segun Osoba, the Alake of Egba, Oba Oyeade Lipede, and other Egba traditional rulers and many eminent personalities. Our men and women members from various Archdeaconries were in their respective colour wears. The evangelical Bishop of Offa Missionary Diocese, the Rt. Revd. G.A.Akinbiyi, gave a very challenging and inspiring address.

International Conferences

By the end of December 1996, when my dear father-in-law, Pa Moses Ademuyiwa, died at a very ripe age, I knew that the following year would be busy for the members of my immediate and extended families. The burial brought many of our members from Egba to celebrate the occasion at Ipesi-Akoko, on Saturday 19th April, 1997. The funerals took place a week after our Diocesan synod.

The synod themes for 1997 and 1998 were made practical by God in my life ministry. In February 1997, in the spirit of the proclamation of the good news to all mankind, Archbishop J.A. Adetiloye chose me among other bishops from different dioceses of the Province of Nigeria to go with him to Malaysia, representing the Church of Nigeria, at the South-South zone of the Anglican Communion Conference. It was a pre-lambeth conference. The Rt. Rev. (later Most Rev. Dr.) E.A. Ademowo of Ilesha Diocese, and myself were in the same discussion group. We spoke on "Inter-faith Encounter in Nigeria," it was a very rewarding conference. We also found the discussion to be spiritually, intellectually and socially challenging.

Haggai Training at Hawaii Island

On Monday 28 April, 1997, I embarked on an exciting journey from Lagos through Amsterdam, Los Angeles, to Hawaii Island. The training course was initiated and made possible for me through the kind and loving agency of the Rt. Rev. (later Most Rev.) Peter Jasper Akinola. I was invited to take part in the Leadership Training in Hawaii Island, an extension of the head-office in Singapore.

The required amount of five hundred dollars was sent there ahead of me by a kind, pious, God-fearing and loving friend, Chief Tunji Odegbami, the Managing Director (MD) of the J.K.K. Computers Company, Lagos. Bishop Emmanuel

Chukwuma was also invited. The world famous Institute trained participants to be pro-active and mobilizers in their fields of endeavour and make themselves serve as assets to their communities too.

World's Biggest Tree

In Mawui, the Capital Town of Hawaii Island was an unusually big tree which was said to be the biggest in the world; it was said to be over one hundred years old. As it was spreading, its branches were shooting down to have roots. This added attraction to this very beautiful island, a place of many world travellers' dream and desire. Due to its fascinating scenery, Hawaii Island has become an international resort with commercial attraction to which world-class entrepreneurs flock throughout the year, the factor that has boosted its economy immensely.

Aside from leadership training opportunities provided by the Institute, it had a programme which was targeted at encouraging and developing talents, as well as spreading the gospel of Christ. We re-discovered our hidden gifts in our various walks of life, which hitherto had not been tapped. In the spirit of practical demonstration of the policy of the Institute, we were made to showcase our talents in writing, swimming, dancing, music, etc. To my greatest surprise, I was a star award-winner with a second position in the "Writing Contest Haggai Institute 1997." I made frantic but fruitless effort to locate the man who came first out of about 50 contestants. My colleague, Bishop Chukwuma took part in the swimming exercise. He was one of the most enterprising and outspoken participants.

The training and exposure later enhanced our ministerial performances. The experience also informed the mind that life without service is a sterile life, and talents not developed would become useless.

Daughter's Wedding

As soon as I returned from the beautiful Island of Hawaii, we put quick arrangement toward Olusola's wedding that was due to take place on Saturday 14th June, 1997. Sola (her fond name) deeply in love with her suitor, Segun Adeoye, was in her final year in the University of Ibadan College of Medicine, (UCH). Eunice, my wife was very able and understanding. While I was away in Hawaii, she was saddled with the responsibilities of preparation.

The traditional engagement was handled by Ibadan Diocesan Mothers' Union engagement committee members. Papa, Bishop and Mama G. I. O. Olajide were present at the engagement, which took place on Friday June 13, 1997. This event was mainly attended by our family members and friends, and those of Segun Adeoye too.

The following day, Saturday 14th June, was the church marriage. The marriage service took place in the Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake-Abeokuta at 11.00am. The Military Administrator of Ogun State, Wing Comdr. Emmanuel Ewang, Oba Oyebade Lipede, the Alake of Egba with all other traditional rulers of Ogun State were present. An inspiring sermon was delivered by the Diocesan Bishop of Akoko, the Rt. Revd. J.O.K. Olowokure, among many Anglican Bishops who were in attendance.

The chairman at the reception that followed was Chief Joop Berkhout, formerly of Spectrum Publishing Company and later the Executive Director, Safari Books Ltd. Chief Berkhout had long been in Nigeria and was conferred with a chieftaincy title by one of the foremost paramount traditional rulers in Nigeria, the Ooni of Ile-Ife. By his rich experience of life in Nigeria, Chief Berkhout thrilled the people at the reception with his wise contributions and counsel.

Religious Leaders' World Conference

Between 24th–30th November 1997, I was in Washington DC, United States of America, to attend and present a paper at the World Religious Leaders' Conference. It was sponsored by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, but the invitation came at the instance of Professor Kehinde Olupona, a Social Studies professor of the Ohio University, USA. Some of the papers presented at the Conference, which included mine, were published in a book.

Through the grace of God, I was able to attend the above mentioned conferences at no cost to my diocese, but God used the experience, acquired, to orientate my ministry, particularly in Egba Diocese. When our ways are directed by God, He provides the freedom and fulfilment that we did not know existed.

Anyone who knows the geographical locations of Malaysia and Hawii Island, would see how close they are to each other on the World Map. To visit Hawaii Island, flying from Nigeria westward over the vast continent of the United States of America, and visiting Malaysia, by flying eastward over India and Bangkok from Nigeria, within three months interval, is to travel round the world. For God to make me safely accomplish the journeys through His amazing love, I could only say in the words of the Psalmist:

"You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. How excellent are your Name and works O Lord! (Psalm 77:14).

More Weddings within the Family

The year 1998 was also full of events of happy celebrations within our family and around the Diocese. Rev. (later Canon) John Oluseyi Owadayo, the son of my late brother (Zachariah A. Owadayo) was the first to get married in the year. We did his engagement at Ibadan early on Saturday, 10th January, while the marriage service proper took place at the Christ Anglican Church, Orisunmibare-Bodija, Ibadan, at 12noon, where he and Kemi Adebayo were joined together in holy matrimony, for better, for worse, in the presence of a big congregation. Exactly five years after the death of his father, Rev. John Owadayo's marriage gave me and my wife immense joy. A contingent of our clergymen and lay members went to Ibadan with us to grace the occasion. We were happy and proud to play the roles of father and mother to him.

Next to John was that of Rev. (later Venerable) Tunde Tehinmosan, the son of my half-sister, Mrs Marian Tehinmosan. He married Bolanle Oluyemisi Ajayi on Saturday 7th February, 1998, at the Holy Trinity, Omofe-Ilesha.

On Friday 20th of the same month of February, our first son, Olufemi, and Olutoyin Sanyaolu, daughter of Chief Dr. Bunmi Sanyaolu and Chief Mrs Dayo Sanyaolu were engaged. And on Saturday 21st, they were joined together in holy matrimony at the Holy Trinity Church, Ikereku-Abeokuta. The Church was crowded beyond capacity. The Rt. Revd. T.I.O. Bolaji, the Bishop of Yewa Diocese preached the sermon.

'Stewards of God's Grace'

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we addressed 1998 Diocesan Synod on the above theme. The Grace of God has been freely given to us and by that grace, we are empowered

for service. God has favoured and honoured us by making us His fellow-workers, as Paul warned his Corinthian congregation not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6:1). We similarly reminded our members that God had called us out of darkness, into His marvellous light, and has made us a chosen people and endowed us with the grace of God, we are in fellowship with God to work for Him. (1 Peter 2:9). Chief Dr. Ernest Shonekan and Otunba Ayodele Oladunni of Mobil Oil Company were among special guests who attended the Synod on Friday 24th April, and they gave handsome donations.

Through the theme of the Synod which was applied to every area of life, the message was well appropriated by the people. By the inexhaustible grace of Jesus, we have received blessings after blessings in life. We must be ready therefore to work for God in appreciation of His grace and love.

We informed the Synod that we found hundreds of cement blocks wasting away, and on inquiring, we learnt that they were the left-over from the Cathedral building, completed since over ten years. We told them we would have to start on the new Bishop's court for which they were meant. After a brief debate, we agreed on the 2nd of May, 1998, for the turning of the first sod.

Physical Development

New Bishop's court Foundation-Laying

On the 2nd of May, 1998, at 9.45a.m, the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Dr. Oyebade Lipede arrived for the foundation laying, scheduled for 11.00am, thinking that it was going to be 10.am. This was the unique occasion that brought the Kabiyesi to stay in the Bishop's court, and we spent one long hour together! Oba Dr. Oyebade Lipede was one of the most humble, punctual and time-consious persons whenever he had any service or any occasion to which he was invited.

Chief Dr. E.A.O. Shonekan and others later arrived for the occasion. The foundation corner stones were laid by the Alake, Chief Shonekan, a woman and myself. There was a mini-launching from which a total sum of one million, eight hundred thousand naira (₦1.8m) was realised. One million naira out of this amount was generously donated by Chief Dr. Shonekan, which made him the greatest donor. He strongly appealed to all for financial support to let the project have quick and successful completion. This kind gesture by Chief Shonekan was the beginning of such free givings to the Diocese of Egba and other churches in respect of various projects. Oba Oyebade Lipede, the Alake of Egba, also donated gladly, having spoken similarly.

A dynamic member of the Diocese and the Otun-Iyalode of Egba Christians, Chief Mrs Alaba Lawson, made a powerfully moving and convincing speech, encouraging all to support the building of the new Bishop's court to match the modern trends of development, befitting the status of the Diocese. She also donated generously towards the project.

Lambeth 1998

The Lambeth Conference is the world-famous Conference of the Anglican Bishops, held every ten years. The preparation for that of 1998 started around 1993, which gave enough time for preparation. There were pre-Lambeth talks on the conference theme which were intended to carry both clergy and the laity along, even though they would not be at the conference. This was the trend all over the Anglican world.

Shocking News

The preparation was in high gear when on Saturday 9th May, we received the sad news of the death, through motor accident, of our very dear friend, the Rt. Rev. A.S.O. Olowoyo, the Bishop of Ijebu Diocese. We had the saddest duty of breaking the news to his family and Canon Adeloye who were in our All Saints Church, Kemta. The incident dampened our desire for the Lambeth Conference.

Another shocking news that was near incredible but shook the entire nation was the death of General Sani Abacha, on Monday 8th June. Nearly the entire nation rejoiced, instead of mourning, at the announcement of his death over the radio network news, because of his tyrannical rule.

Following the ordination of priests on Sunday 5th July in St. Peter's Cathedral, Ake, my wife and I left for the Lambeth Conference on Monday 6th, due to take place in the University of Kent. The mammoth crowd presented a moving sight for any first timer. We had very rewarding and educative discussions on various subjects. We returned to Nigeria in August.

Back to Work

As soon as we were back from Lambeth, we met the Building Committee to mobilize for more serious work. By 1999, we had realised about four million and three hundred thousand naira, and so we decided to do the work by direct labour, instead of contracting it at a cost of between thirty-two and thirty-six million naira, which we could not afford. We however resolved to use the same artisans that contractors would use. But even then this would not do much of the enormous project we had embarked upon.

On Friday 8th January, 1999, the eve of nation-wide gubernatorial and state House of Assembly election day, the

Diocesan Chancellor, Chief Akin Delano (SAN), the Diocesan Registrar, Chief Tayo Falode and the Deputy-Registrar, Chief Wale Otesile and myself, went to see Arc. Layi Balogun in his old Bodija, Ibadan, house. He advised us on how to spread the little amount we had to “cover the carcass up to the roof level.” His professional expertise advice was most helpful and encouraging. This we did and with the generous personal donations from the Governor, Chief Segun Osoba, Chief Arc. Femi Majekodunmi, (whose Firm of Architects did the Design and Plan, free of cost), and few other people, the house was roofed. The roofing of the house was another proof that God was our pillar of support and what He had done was a miracle!

God, by the usual way of surprising us beyond our understanding, brought Engr. Rear/ Admiral Femi Olumide (Rtd) out of the blue. He was like a hidden talent, a rare treasure, whom I discovered and found to be so useful and appointed him to supervise the project. He did it with passion, more than what any contractor would have done. He did the supervision, restructuring and reconstructing of one office point so flawlessly and selflessly, that he convinced everyone that ‘he had a mind to work.’

When Nehemiah was rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, he observed that they were able to rebuild the wall to completion because, “the people worked with all their heart.” (Neh. 4:6). That was true of Admiral Olumide, judging by his spirit of dedicated workmanship. Anyone who allows God to use him will have his talents and potentials enhanced and maximized.

By the way, Rear/ Admiral Olumide, an extraction of the famous Olumide family of Oshiele-Abeokuta, was a product of Igbobi College, an institution whose products were known for excellent services as models for others. Olumide rendered his professional supervisory services free of cost to the Diocese, from the beginning to the completion of the work.

The then Governor of Ogun State, Chief Segun Osoba, was impressed with the quality of the work when he personally came to inspect the progress of the project. He twice donated generously towards the completion of the project from his own personal purse, because he himself was a committed financial member of the Diocese.

Bye, Bye, Papa Adetiloye

The year 1999 was very memorable in the annals of the Church of Nigeria. It marked the end of its historic chapter, under the visionary leadership of the Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye, as the Primate, Archbishop and Metropolitan of all Nigeria. He was a product, the firstfruit of the first generation of believers and the father of the new crop of Church leaders of the Church of Nigeria. His retirement coincided with the end of the century.

All over the Province of Nigeria, Papa Adetiloye was celebrated from one diocese to the other. Rounding off his farewell activities, Egba Diocese where he began his ministry, was the last place he visited in Lagos province. Traditional rulers in Ogun State, civil servants and important personalities gathered on Wednesday 22nd December, at the Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake-Abeokuta, to give him a rousing welcome and goodbye, wishing him a happy retirement.

A New Primate – A New Dawn

The venue for the Episcopal meeting scheduled to take place in Kaduna on Monday 21st February, 2000, had to be changed to Abuja. The civil disorder in Kaduna led to serious fight between Christians and Muslims as part of the aftermath of the presidential election of the previous year. While some Bishops were trapped in Kaduna, many could not enter.

On Tuesday 22nd, Bishops successfully convened in Abuja to elect a new Primate – the Most Rev. Peter Jasper

Akinola. Primate Peter Akinola was divinely raised and developed in the north, where he grew up with the village church in Abuja which was then a jungle. He was in the habit of a village pastor, strong like little David, but proactive and restlessly on the move. He began to mobilise the entire Church of Nigeria in the same way he galvanized the little church in Abuja from the cradle. By thoughts and performance, as a leader on the saddle, he acted swiftly to get things done without wasting time. He mobilised the generation of his followers with his characteristic slogan - "action, action, action!" as if to say, 'This is not where we ought to be.'

In two decades of his superintendence, he turned 'Abuja jungle church' to 'Abuja luxuriant diocese.' His ten years of dynamic leadership lifted the Church of Nigeria and himself to an enviable and challenging height and to a global position of heroism. His case-study becomes a good illustration for the up-coming church workers who are after ready-made city-church that God can make arid land fertile.

At times, a man's destiny is hidden, with his talents undeveloped or buried under years of unrecognized service, but when there is a breakthrough, his head rises above water-level, his efforts are enhanced and talents maximized. Primate Akinola's case was like that.

Joyful Celebrations

The Diocese of Egba, and the Cathedral in particular had occasions of celebration when on Saturday 15th April 2000, Primate Akinola was given a rousing hero's welcome to Egba Diocese. On Sunday 16th April, we had a thanksgiving service at the Cathedral, followed by a grand reception. Other two occasions of joy were the election of Provost James Afolabi Popoola early in June, as Bishop of Osun Diocese, followed by his consecration on 30th July. Under his leadership, the

Cathedral made commendable progress, both physically and spiritually, and there was fear that the graph might fall at his exit. So, it was an occasion of mixed joy. The second occasion of joy was the appointment of Venerable Professor A.D. Akinde as Provost of the Cathedral on Thursday 23rd November. It came as a booster for the morale of the Cathedral.

In our family, we had an additional grand-daughter on Tuesday 16th May. Femi and Toyin had a baby girl, our fourth grandchild – she was named Motunrayo Atirola Omosan Debie, in Lagos on Tuesday 23rd May 2001, the Year of Jubilee.

The year 2001 had a number of activities lined up right from the beginning to the end. On 14th Nov. 2001, the house was dedicated by the Primate of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, who also gladly made a generous donation towards the completion. The Pimate described the buiding as the most beautiful and best Bishops court in the Church of Nigeria! The dedication ceremony was also attended by Governor Olusegun Osoba.

One of the experiences gained from the subtle way we started the Bishops court buiding, and completed it was seen as the fulfilment of Psalm 127:1 – “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain...”

The enthusiastic manner some people, most especially distant members, who were not formally informed or invited, contributed to the completion of the project still baffles me. One of such people was Chief Ephraim O. Shodunke, our loving and faithful Diocesan Commissary in Kano, who casually heard of the project when he came home and generously donated towards its completion.

Another distant member was Chief Mrs. Bunmi Martins, the Deputy-Director of BEMIL Security Company, who came only to hear of the proposed Bishops court launch, five days before the event. She felt bad for not being told earlier. She

took invitation cards to collect free donations from her friends and later cheerfully brought a handsome amount of money towards the project. On the completion of the project, Chief Mrs Bunmi Martins and her husband, Prince Jide Martins sent a settee and four well-tailored chairs for the Bishop's Office. It was characteristic of Chief Mrs. Bunmi and Prince Martins to call us, and even from outside the country, to ask about the welfare of the Diocese and the workers. Even though the couple resided in Lagos, they identified with the Diocese so intimately that they were always glad to attend any diocesan function at the latest information.

When God has purposed to use someone for his work, He multiplies His grace in one's life. God calls us to obedience without showing us the end result from the beginning. Thus, we began the Bishops court project, without being sure of where money would come from, but we trusted God's providence.

The years 1995 to 1999 witnessed the beginning of planting and laying of foundations of churches and vicarages in the Diocese. During this period, about seventeen of such functions were carried out. The Primate, Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, (my parishioner number one), advised us to involve church members to collectively prosecute church projects. He demonstrated this actively through his leading financial and advisory contribution toward Our Saviour's Church building project, Oke-Ata, and St. Michael's Church building project at Ago-Oba, the latter being his home church. He taught their respective Vicars, Revds. Enitan Olajide and O.B. Odutayo (later Archdeacons) the lesson of involving all church members to participate in the work of building or re-building church or vicarage, however small their contributions might be. Their lay-members too were led by Chiefs Erinle, Tunde Eniyansoro, J.A. Bankole, etc., to mobilize them in collective work.

When the roof of Our Saviour's Church, Oke-Ata caved in and sagged about two or three times, before we resorted to launching fund and use iron-trusses and beams to solidify it, the Primate was personally present to advise and assist financially.

A brief reference has been made above, as to the year 2000 being very momentous for the Cathedral of St. Peter Ake-Abeokuta, the beacon of worship centre. It witnessed an impressive worship life and physical development during the ten-year tenure of the out-going Provost, the Very Rev J.A. Popoola, with his wife.

In God's own wisdom and time, and to the greatest surprise of everyone, He allayed the fears of the likelihood that the standard of the Cathedral would fall, by bringing Venerable Professor Adebayo Dada Akinde, a staff of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) Ile Ife. Very Rev. Akinde and his wife, Dr. Mrs. Bassey Akinde, soon settled down to adapt themselves to the Cathedral life. To the glory of God, the Akindes, within a short period, changed the phase of the Cathedral socially and physically.

Soon, pleasant surprises appeared everywhere. Provost Akinde mobilized the Cathedral for many challenging projects. The first was the most urgent; the Chapter House, which was completed under one year. He did not stop at that, he built the Oba Oyebade Lipede Bookshop House and another similar to that was a Bookshop House to commemorate Oba Gbadebo III. His good human relations widened the social horizon of the Cathedral membership by attracting their sons and daughters in Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, etc., who had long been away from home. Provost Akinde did not limit his search for new members for the Cathedral, he brought some to meet the Bishop and they were gladly in diocesan aspirations.

2001 Synod – “Faith of our Fathers”

Our synod theme for 2001 was chosen and guided by God to reflect on the historical origin and experiences of the faithfuls in their generations in parts of the world, including Africa. There were people in the history of the church who could be regarded as heroes of faith, by considering what harrowing situations they had passed through on account of their faith.

The Bible has a long list of heroes of faith, who in their several generations, went through varying searing experiences, but who refused to renounce their faith in spite of their travail. They were tortured, made to face jeers, flogged, chained, imprisoned, ...stoned, ...sawed in two, ...destitute, ...persecuted, ...they wandered in deserts and mountains, etc.

The Book of Hebrews says that they were all commended for their faith, and for the memory of present-day Christians, to encourage them to face life gallantly and to be prepared for the future, because the future belongs to the brave. As if that was prophetic, for the first time, gruesome hostility, in fact, open persecution of Christians, was being declared by a group called ‘Boko-Haram’ in the northern parts of this country at the time of writing this biography.

When the line of these faithful believers apparently ended, different nations of the world, reached by the torch of Christianity, also produced heroes of faith. There are many areas where societies and human lives have been radically changed, following their adherence to the faith. The heroic model arose among the ascetics, the hermits, desert dwellers etc. who were, apart from the bible heroes of faith, martyrs, including men and women, who were subjected to severe torture, hardships, or underwent plain denial of earthly pleasures. The cases of the seven martyrs of Uganda and Walter Bako of Lokoja, Nigeria, will for ever be remembered in history.

Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC)

Some years before his retirement in 1999, the then Primate of Church of Nigeria, Most Rev. Joseph Abiodun Adetiloye appointed me as Chairman, Theological Doctrinal Committee, for the Church of Nigeria.

In the year 2001, the new Primate of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, graciously nominated me to serve on the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC). The Commission was set up by the outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Hon. Dr George Carey, following the last Lambeth Conference of 1998, which witnessed a very controversial session over the thorny issue of the homosexuals, Lesbians etc. in the church that had threatened to tear apart, or put on the verge of collapse, the unity of the Anglican Communion. The constituent members were:

1. The Rt. Revd Professor Stephen Sykes, Church of England- Chairman.
2. Mrs. Clare Amos, Anglican Communion Office, – Acting Secretary.
3. The Very Revd Dr. Victor Atta-Baffoe, Church of the Province of West Africa.
4. The Rt. Revd John Baycroft, Anglican Communion Office – Secretary.
5. The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron, Anglican Communion Office – Secretary.
6. Rt. Revd Dr. Samuel R. Cutting, Church of North India
7. The Revd Dr. Kortright Davis, Church in the Province of the West Indies.
8. The Rt. Revd J. Mark Dyer, The Episcopal Church.
9. The Rt. Revd Tan Sri Dr. Lim Cheng Ean, Church of the South East Asia.

10. The Revd Professor Galgalo, Anglican Church of Kenya.
11. The Revd Canon David Hamid, Anglican Communion Office – Secretary.
12. The Revd Dr. Bruce Kate, Anglican Church of Australia.
13. Professor Esther Mombo, Anglican Church of Kenya.
14. The Rt. Revd Dr. Matthew Owadayo, Church of Nigeria.
15. The Revd Canon Luke Pato, Anglican Church of Southern Africa.
16. The Rt. Revd Associate Professor Stephen K. Pickard, Anglican Church of Australia.
17. The Rt. Revd Paul Richardson, Church of England.
18. The Revd Professor Nicholas Sagovsky, Church of England.
19. Dr. Eileen Scully, Anglican Church of Canada.
20. Dr. Jennie Te Paa, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.
21. The Revd Canon Philip H. E. Thomas, Church of England – Assistant to the Chairman.
22. The Rt. Revd Dr. N. Thomas Wright, Church of England.
23. The Very Revd Dr. Paul Zahl, The Episcopal Church.
24. The Rt. Revd Hector Zavala, Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America.

There were four observers and four administrative staff members in attendance. The meetings of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission were held between 2001 and 2007 in England, the USA, in Africa and Malaysia.

The 72-page Book, 'Communion, Conflict and Hope,' was the product of our meeting.

Covenant and Communion Conflict

The Commission which met in England, USA, Nairobi and Malaysia between 2001 and 2007, and yearly, every September, had the interval to work, produce and present an agreed and agreeable resolution to the Archbishops on Primates' Council, through the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the 2008 Lambeth Conference. The Commission decided to work on this important aspect of our belief which is as old as the Commandment that God gave us, through Moses. Through the ages, God has urged His people to know Him, acknowledge Him and follow His ways that they may have eternal life. The climax of the God-man covenant, ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ, who says, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins," (Mt. 26:28). Our Communion (Holy Eucharist) is best meaningfully interpreted and understood in light of the Covenant that God made with us through His Son, for resolving the Anglican Communion conflict, because we are a covenanted people, not of the letter but of the Spirit. What those of the deviant behaviour in our Communion need, is the Teaching Ministry about the 'Glory of the New Covenant.' Hear what St Paul said,

"If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!" (2 Cor.3:9).

The Commission had long deliberations on the issue, prayed and sought the face and guidance of the Holy Spirit before coming up with the suggestions for resolution. Efforts made by various people at various levels of debate - at the diocesan, the provincial, and especially by the Conference of the Primates, and finally at the Lambeth Conference of 1998,

which witnessed distressing and strong protests through dialogues by Provinces (with the concerted role of the Province of Nigeria under the outspoken leadership of Primate J. A. Adetiloye, and later under the same equally outspoken and understandably stormy leadership of Primate Peter Akinola) were appreciated.

There is nothing worthy of note that has not been said or done. It was like the issue of marriage and family life, the walls buttressing the sacred institution were in danger of collapse on the grounds of moral principles. It was a case where God's moral principles could not be negotiated to give way to human concerns. There were discouragement, disillusionment and even despair, in parts of the Communion, following the irreparable loss and irreconcilable resolve among the Primates.

Between the first meeting of the Commission in Wimbledon, England, in 2001, and its last meeting in Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia in 2007, the unity of the Communion was deteriorating by the day! Members of the Commission were only hoping that the situation would improve. Nobody seemed to quite understand why the devil, through human deviant behaviour, had to impair the sweet harmony of the Communion irreparably.

We have made a mark as St. Paul rightly said:

"...God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, and understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse... Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity...God gave them over to shameful lusts" (Rom. 1:20, 24, 26). God is jealous and burning with jealousy for His creatures and the gospel remains "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

“The sins of the homosexuals and lesbians have wasted precious time, resources and bartered the image of the Anglican Communion as a result of which GAFCON has been born and babies thrown away with bath water.”

2002 Synod – Covenant of Love and Peace

Our Diocesan Synod theme for 2002 was ‘Covenant of Love and Peace.’ It had no bearing to the title of any book that might be written or that emerged later, as a result of any conference deliberations. Our 2002 Synod theme was addressed to our Diocese and the nation of Nigeria at a time that political campaigns and party wranglings were heating up. It was intended to broker peace and love among the political party members in our immediate community. It was also related to our relationships with God and our fellow men.

I invited a guru on financial management, the Supra-Diocesan treasurer, as well as the Treasurer for Lagos West Diocese, Mr. Olutoyin Okeowo, to address the Synod on ‘Covenant Seed Fund: an Additional Source of Income for Evangelism.’ This address was an eye-opener that motivated many to adopt covenant seed to plant churches. The result, as usual, is increase in membership and financial resources. Mr. Okeowo personally donated a handsome amount of money to the Diocese.

2003 Synod – Ministry of Service

Some months before this Synod, the former Chancellor of the Diocese, Hon. Justice Owolabi Kolawole, visited me to ask for permission to host the Synod. It was a pleasant surprise to hear of this request which came voluntarily from such a personality. Of course, I thanked him and gladly granted his request. Justice Kolawole had retired both from being the Judge of the High

Court of Justice and the Chancellor of the Diocese since 1990 when Yewa Diocese was created out of Egba-Egbado Diocese. He was the Baba-ijo of St. Andrew's Church, Ibara. He was a product, and later, Chairman Board of Governors of Abeokuta Grammar School (AGS).

Hon. Justice Kolawole felt concerned for the poor financial state of the Diocese, and he therefore wrote to his friends in the Judiciary, far and near, to raise money for the Diocese. Thus, his being the first to show such a kind gesture posed a challenge. He hosted the synod with all the sessions held in his church, and gave to the Diocese all the money he realised in order to improve the finances of the Diocese. This act by Hon Justice Kolawole registered effectively and practically the theme of the Synod - "The Ministry of Service."

The Presidential Charge emphasised the theme as God's divine call to His people to follow His example as Jesus Christ also demonstrated by His teaching, that it is more blessed to serve than to be served. The art of giving as understood hereby is not man to man alone, but equally important is, giving to God and support His work as a form of service. Thus, He said that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

When we lost some of our episcopal belongings to armed robbers on 1st of March, 1996, Hon. Justice Kolawole kindly bought one episcopal item as gift, and replacement when some years later he traveled abroad, an act that showed him as a caring Christian, not only for the church, but also for individuals.

The hosting of Synod for 2003 by Hon. Justice Kolawole did our ministry one added good, it set in motion a chain of volunteers to follow suit. As God moved the heart of Justice Kolawole to generate fund for the diocesan synod, so He moved various individual and church volunteers to host Synod sessions for the purpose of boosting the finances of the Diocese.

Essence of Service

In order to make the members of the Synod know that the 'supreme task' assigned all believers is Church Planting, I invited Venerable M.O. Soyawo of Lagos Diocese to speak on it. Everyone was inspired and challenged to embark on church planting and harvesting souls for God. This reference to various individuals' contributions to our ministry in this part of my biography is to establish that willingness to serve with humility, is genuine integrity of character. This is elucidated by the inspiring words of Albert Schweitzer:

"I do not know what your destiny will be, but of one thing I can be certain – the only ones among you who will truly be happy, are those who sought and found how to serve."

The 2003 Synod missed the Diocesan President of Women's organisations, Mrs. E. Owadayo, who was unavoidably absent as she was convalescing at home after her discharge from St Nicholas Hospital, Lagos. The report of her illness is fully recorded in our impression about the hospital in this memoir. The synod took place in the month of National Houses of Assembly, Gubernatorial and Presidential elections, between Saturdays 12th and 19th April, and then State Assembly on Saturday 3rd May, 2003.

New Governor and Deputy

On Sunday 1st of June, 2003, we welcomed the new Ogun State Governor – Gbenga Daniel, and his Deputy, to a thanksgiving service at the Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake-Abeokuta. The occasion provided the opportunity of telling the two leaders that, while human rules or reigns have a beginning and an end, God has no beginning and no end, but He determines both. They are creatures of time while God owns time and eternity.

On Thursday 5th June, after the funeral service of songs for the late father of Bishop (later Archbishop) M.O.Akinyemi at Aiyetoro-Ekiti, we moved to St George's Church Okeagbe-Akoko, for the burial of my benefactor, Sir Chief R.F. Giwa, on Friday 6th June, 2003.

2004 Synod – 'Celebrating The Mysteries of God's Work'

When moved by the Spirit of God to choose the above theme, we least expected that the 'duo' we often referred to as 'mystery twins' would volunteer to host our Synod. They were the popular identical 'Oyewole Twins' – who were both Chiefs, Doctors Dotun and Femi Oyewole. To let the reader have a very brief insight into their history will enrich one's knowledge and faith.

The Oyewole Twins were born to Mr. Solomon Oyewole-Joel and Mrs. Janet Adewunmi Joel, who were Church workers married for years without any issue. As a church Agent, Mr S Oyewole-Joel and his wife prayed and fasted tirelessly for years, waiting upon the Lord for a child. In the opinions of many, It was as if God is not on their side. They themselves, almost gave up.

Someone said that God's purposes are revealed and His power displayed in our darkest experiences. When at last the twins were sent to them, their joy did not last, as the twins' mother died after. They did not live to know their mother! They were left in the care of their grandmother, Madam Rachel Sobande. At age seven, they also lost their father. They faced a bleak future and were left to the mercy of just anybody who cared. They encountered untold suffering. Like David the Psalmist said, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." (27:10) The twins were truly forsaken by their father and mother and so were left to the care of God who received them.

They were so identical that their teachers, pupils and people could not differentiate Taiwo from Kehinde. At the time of our ministry in Egba, I could not differentiate them, even after ten years of our togetherness. Even at 80, these 'mystery twins' remained too identical to differentiate. They did not host the Synod for the sake of it, but raised fund and they themselves generously donated so that the Diocese might be able to meet her commitments.

Apart from hosting the synod voluntarily, they donated gifts in cash and kind to their St. John's Church, Igbein. For these twins, it was an occasion of celebrating the goodness of the Lord. They built a very modern church at Aberuagba, to commemorate the ministry of their later father, and also for being their birth place. Coincidentally, their cousin, Ven. F.A.O. Adekunle, the vicar of the church, had a strong support of his twin-uncles. In a light mood, Ven. and Mrs. Adekunle were always said to have turned the church to a 'Cathedral in the Jungle!'

The 'Oyewole Twins' appreciated God for raising them to a position of eminence, and to celebrate the grace and goodness of the Lord, they habitually gladly trained, free of costs, poor pupils and some church workers with low standard of education at their Abeokuta Continuing Education Centre (ABEOCEC).

This Education Centre was very popular at our time in Abeokuta; many up-coming clergymen and their wards, and even ordinary people benefited a lot by this scheme which enabled them to gain admission to various institutions of higher learning.

Having been so blessed by God, the twins saw themselves as agents of service at anywhere that occasion called for duty. They donated heavily to complete both Bishop's court and Diocesan Jubilee Multipurpose Hall.

Synod 2005 Theme :“The Ministry of Giving”

The Theme for 2005 Synod was chosen in realisation of what God had done for us as a Diocese and as individuals, especially to mark one hundred and sixty years of Christianity in Egbaland, and to thank God for our own ten years in the Diocese. God by His inspiration made the delegates to know that the ‘ministry of giving’ is a great matter of relationships. This matter involves time and energy. It is a valuable relationship with God and with one another. God has a master plan and purpose for the grace of relationship with Him.

In Genesis 1:28, God gave certain gifts to man and woman whom He created in His image. He created and empowered them to be fruitful, to increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it. God’s grand purpose for this privileged position would be for man to serve God.

The climax of God’s benevolence to man is expressed in St. John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” The charge is to love God, believe Him and have eternal life. And those who receive Him are called out of darkness to His wonderful light that they might go to declare the praises of Him who called them.

The Giver of the gifts we receive is God, as Jacob vowed “...and of all that you give me, I will give you a tenth.” (Gen. 28:22) This is the reciprocal way that we receive gifts from and give to God. Whatever we have are from God, that was what the Lord says:

*Let not the wise boast of his wisdom
Or the strong man boast of his strength
Or the rich man boast of his riches,*

*But let him who boasts boast about this:
That he understands and knows me,...
That I am the Lord who exercises kindness,
Justice and righteousness on earth..."(Jer. 9:23)*

Whatever we are or have, is by the grace of God, "as you excel in everything- in faith, in speech, in knowledge...see that you also excel in this grace of living," (2 Cor. 8:7) says Paul.

In this spirit, Chief Akin Delano (SAN), the Chancellor of the Diocese, with his wife, Kate, volunteered to host our Diocesan Synod with the Cathedral as venue. Chief Akin Delano, a London trained lawyer, and an extraction of the well-known Delano family of Ifo, was one of the assests we inherited from our predecessor, Rt. Rev. T.I. Akintayo. He was a very decent man in appearance, character and learning. He was appreciably moderate in speech and conduct. Our Chancellor had a passion for a Diocesan Foundation, that all the money raised in the Synod was strictly passed to the Foundation. By the time of our retirement, the Diocesan Endowment had well over six million naira (N6million) in its kitty, with Chief Dr. E.A.O. Shonekan GCFR, CBE Chairman, Diocesan Bishop, Chief Akin Delano, (SAN), Chief Dr. Segun Osunkeye, OON, Mr. Rosiji Jr, etc, as members of the Board of Trustee. The Foundation was titled "Lipede-Adebo-Rosiji" Foundation ('LAR' for short).

We were fortunate to have Chief Akin Delano to work with us as the Diocesan Chief Legal Adviser. He was humble, objective and often gave useful counsel on things pertaining to the interest of the Diocese and about our welfare. He, among others, was part of God's plan to make us achieve what we did. They came our way in life, so as to work together as a band of pilgrims. In our togetherness, God blessed us with a proactive ministry of humble and purposeful achievements.

Under Chief Akin Delano's legal leadership, we had a crop of legal assistants which included, Chief Tayo Falode, son of late Canon Falode. He was the Registrar that we inherited from our predecessor. Tayo Falode Esq attended and defended court cases on behalf of the Diocese, free of charge. A very resourceful legal luminary, Tayo was very useful and successful in prosecuting trespassers on our land. He chaired the committee that twice restructured the Diocese; he was closely assisted by the clergy-loving Deputy-Registrar, Chief Wale Otesile.

We appointed a legal firebrand and a 'stormy-petrel', Barrister B.O. Ogunmodede, as Registrar Assistant 1. He was a man with future prospect in his career and an asset to the church. He was full of energy and drive.

I cannot forget Barrister Funmi Ogunlesi, an up-coming, intelligent, quiet and very resourceful first woman-lawyer to be appointed Registrar Assistant 11 in the Diocese. She was often ready to carry out any assignment with the fear of God.

The Deputy-Chancellor, Hon. Justice Bode Lokulo-Sodipe, was appointed some years before our retirement. He was a hidden talent whom God raised to play a key role in the major circumstances of re-shaping the life of the Diocese. Son of an Anglican retired priest, (Venerable O.A. Lokulo-Sodipe), Hon Justice Lokulo-Shodipe's emergence proved that the life of every believer is like a hidden talent which, when unearthed, God uses to reveal a meaning that extends beyond the immediate happenings of our environment or generation.

Hon Justice Lokulo-Sodipe showed the humble, God-fearing character that influenced our ministry for good and from his appreciable performance, many have drawn inspiration. The moral advisory and financial contributions of these legal servants of God to our ministry, the Bishops court building and completion of the Multipurpose Hall, would remain indelible in the annals of the Diocese of Egba.

More Cases of 'Ministry of Giving'

Our choice of 'giving ministry' as a theme for the Synod, hosted by Chief Akin Delano, was prompted by his decision to touch and influence many lives, within and outside the Diocese. In dramatic circumstances, and in a way that no one would doubt that God had touched many individuals and churches, who reacted positively to the challenges posed by 1997 to 2006- (a period of ten years) synod themes, more than forty new church foundations, and of many vicarages, were laid through voluntary giving. That was why the first decade of our mission in Egbaland was celebrated generally in gratitude to God. The first decade created among our members, spiritual and physical developments, and there was the urge to do more.

All Souls' Church, Ibara Housing Estate, Abeokuta, took off after we contacted Chief and Mrs G.O. Osoba for permission to use their house in Ibara Housing Estate, Abeokuta. God touched their hearts and they released their house for use.

We appointed Canon (later Venerable) J.O. Farombi, a man who was still full of energy and drive after retirement, to pastor the little flock. The host and hostess, Chief and Chief Mrs. G.O. Osoba, who were our distant members in St. James' Cathedral, Oke-Bola, Ibadan, were soon impressed and attracted by the presence of the young church in their Abeokuta house. They started to come home almost every Sunday to worship in their home church.

The Church was lucky to have the services of dedicated leaders in succession. The immediate successor to Canon Farombi was Canon (later Venerable) Engr. G.O. Ogunsola, who within a short time of his stay, mobilized and caused the congregation to be firmly rooted. Under his dynamic leadership, the search for land to construct a new church building was realised.

In a rather surprising manner, the congregation increased in a short while. Through the presence of God that was with us, the congregation seriously looked for and found a permanent site to build a church; Chief Osoba was instrumental to our securing the land and bore much of the cost. The foundation was laid on 21st November, 1998.

The church enjoyed the services of many priests, most of whom were non-stipendiary. The tenure of Canon (later Ven) Engr. and Engr. Mrs. Dimeji Arawole was monumental. He worked tirelessly with all the resources at his disposal to see to the completion and dedication of the church. He was so committed to developing the church that he soon won many people's admiration.

As if Canon Engr Dimeji Arawole knew he was in his last lap of his life, he employed all the energy at his disposal to prosecute the work of the Church to a logical completion within the shortest time available to him. Soon after the completion, and dedication, he asked to be excused on a journey abroad, where he peacefully rested in the Lord!

Following the painful demise of this faithful servant-vicar, God guided the steps of Rev. Canon (later Venerable) Joshua Dahunsi Omole, to replace him, like He appointed the biblical Joshua to replace Moses. To the glory of God, the church continued to achieve greater spiritual and physical development. Engr. Ajibola supervised the construction of the church free of charge. There was team spirit among the members who donated one item or the other with the Baba Ijo, Chief G.O. Osoba. The church had become one of the leading Archdeaconry headquarters in the Diocese as at the time of our retirement.

Retirement of a Mentor

The year 2004 ended with the sad news of the tsunami tragedy on December 26th that affected twenty countries, killing about 180,000 people within seven hours. My mentor and colleague, with whom I was consecrated, the Rt. Revd Prof. Joseph Akin Omoyajowo, Bishop of Ijebu Diocese, retired on Friday 31st December, 2004. I missed him very much in the provincial caucus of bishops. Apart from our dioceses being neighbours, we were together in the seminary.

St. Jude's Church, Ikija

On the 8th January, 2005, the foundation of St. Jude's new Church building, Ikija-Abeokuta, was laid. The church at Ikija was one of the earliest to be founded on the arrival of the early missionaries. The new building was being built single-handedly by Chief A.A. Egunjobi in fulfilment of the vow he made when he attended St. Jude's Church Primary school, Ikija, that if he attained certain feats in life, he would build a church to the glory of God.

On attaining the age of eighty years, he gave a testimony of what God had done for him at his Lagos Beachland Estate House Chapel thanksgiving service. The church building project was one of the most massive church buildings embarked upon by a single individual in Egbaland. It was close to a roofing stage when we went on retirement.

Chief and chief Mrs. A.A. Egunjobi were very humble and God-loving. They had also generously donated towards the completion of the Diocesan Jubilee Multi-Purpose Hall.

Nigeria-American Church Relationship

The Primate of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Peter Akinola, commissioned Bishop Ikechi Nwosu and myself in 2004

to explore the possible relationship with some churches in the USA. We left Nigeria on Sunday 5th December and had a three-day meeting with the heads of churches in Charleston.

Between Monday 10th and Thursday 15th January, 2005, I played host in return to the Church Relationship Meeting, attended by five bishops/heads of churches from America, Bishop Nwosu and myself. The Primate met the meeting in one of its sessions and also paid a visit to him in his Hill Top residence. The report of the Church Relationship Meeting was given to the Episcopal Retreat, held at Agbarrha Otor, between Monday 17th and Saturday 22nd January, 2005.

Oba Lipede's 90th and Last Birthday

On Wednesday 26th January, 2005, Oba Oyebade Lipede, the Alake and paramount ruler of Egbaland, celebrated his 90th and last birthday. It was a grand occasion attended by eminent dignitaries from all over the country, including President Olusegun Obasanjo. It was his tradition to use his coronation anniversary and birthday to praise God and promote God's glory. The preacher was Pastor Enoch A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria. The following Friday, 4th February however, the God-fearing Oba Lipede joined his ancestors.

The historic letter by this traditional ruler, the role of whose ancestry has become legendary in the history of Christianity, and the role he played in our episcopal ministry in Egbaland, will be found at the end of this memoir. A befitting memorial ecumenical service which attracted a mammoth crowd was held for him on Saturday 7th April at 11am in the Cathedral of St. Peter, Ake-Abeokuta. The Primate could not honour the invitation to preach, so I stood in for him.

Bitter and Sweet Life-Experiences

I have considered it necessary to write a brief note on the above because I have seen that life is not a bed where we roll, romancing. The Bible says:

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” (Heb.2:18). What would our world look like without being linked with pain and suffering? Our fallen world is one wrecked with sin and chaos, tragedy and suffering. In the midst of these, we find God at work, turning weakness to strength, fear to courage, and evil to good. We have found His son Jesus, who has suffered as source of comfort and consolation when called upon.

Little by little, as one passes through various stages of life, one begins to realise that, life, which is a gift from God to man, is not an ordinary gift, but a promise of love which is meaningful and appreciated only when it is shared in relationship with fellow human beings. It is a wonderful mystery of great value. The life of a Christian is that of an adventurous soul which is launched into the greatest and most exciting, but uncertain journey. God guides his feet on a new path of joy, gladness, peace and purpose. It leads him to meet friends and enemies, antagonists and supporters.

Like the world famous evangelist, Billy Graham said in his Book, ‘Journey of Life’, “...For some, life is hectic and full of concerns, a constant struggle to survive.” A Christian gradually learns to understand that the people whom he comes across, and with whom he relates and shares concerns are part of God’s purpose for his life.

There are Christians and non-Christians who pass through series of struggles and difficulties in life; when they run away from one, they meet another, but all these form the twists and turns of occurrences that make their life-stories meaningful, interesting and rewarding to read or learn from.

Jesus Christ, who has become an embodiment of wisdom and power of God for us says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." (1 Tim. 6). St Paul instructed Timothy his son in God, that a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses, but what he does with what he possesses.

Many never stop to ask or think about the road they are treading – where they came from or which way they are going, they seem to have no purpose, no aim and no goal. Christians are not exempted from life struggles or storms, sorrows and travails, the only difference is their reaction to issues.

Selwyn Hughes, the writer of the daily devotional – 'Every Day with Jesus,' described the emotional experiences of two Christians who had suffered bitterly the same form of affliction. One became bitter and allowed it to affect her attitude to her faith negatively, while the other emerged a better Christian, like gold that had passed through the mill refined. The first affected Christian woman succumbed to emotional depression and so, lost the faith in her. St. Paul told his believers in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, "*We must go through many tribulations, hardships to enter the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 14:22).

Uncommon Faith of a Broken-Hearted

One outstanding personality I have drawn valuable lessons and inspiration from, is Chief S.I. Adegbite of Wema Bank .

Many years ago, he built a church for his people at Igbo Oloyin and distributed bundles of clothings indiscriminately among the poor village people. I attended the dedication service which gave me the opportunity of meeting Chief Adegbite. In

the service, he showed himself as a man of humility, commitment and generosity, devoid of ostentation. He built a multi-purpose hall for the Diocese of Ibadan South at Molete Conference Centre, apart from graciously making his houses available (free of cost) to accommodate the Diocesan Bishop which relatively made take-off easy and comfortable for the young Diocese.

Some years ago, Chief S.I. Adegbite painfully lost his illustrious son (Adeyinka) who was abroad to death after a brief illness. In faithful submission to God's will and reverent obedience to Bishop Jacob Ajetunmobi's humble, but wise counsel, Chief Adegbite built an ultra-modern air-conditioned (Adeyinka Adegbite Memorial Anglican) Church in Oluyole Estate, Ibadan, in memory of the son.

Chief Adegbite proved himself to be a hero of faith. He turned his setbacks to springboards of faith, by erecting an imposing edifice to appreciate the goodness of the only wise God - that he ever lived to father that son. He demonstrated the price of leadership which is ability with responsibility to stay positive and reverent, trusting even in the face of trauma and disappointments, even in bereavement. It is a quality of greatness in faithful service. Is it not a lesson for all Christians?

Humbled by Overwhelming Grace

I would like to mention some important people who were motivated to work by overwhelming gratitude to God. Aare Dr. Afe Babalola's life is a living testimony to very humble beginnings but has reached the pinnacle of his profession. He has put character above wealth and has not allowed his ambition to be confined to selfish desires. It is ditto for Chief Ade Ojo, another God-fearing business-moguel who has distributed welfare services among poor citizens, both in Ilara-Mokin, his home town, and elsewhere. Aare Afe Babalola and Chief Ade Ojo were university founders who give educational benefit to many poor children.

In the same vein, General T.Y. Danjuma, giving a testimony on 9th December, 2007 at his 70th birthday simply said: "God is good and He could never be too grateful."

These people strive for integrity through adversity as well as prosperity and are not afraid to stand for truth.

Aare Afe Babalola has become a gem, a role model and an entrepreneur to be celebrated in the history of Nigeria. He rose from a humble homely background to be a principled, firm, affectionate but disciplined legal luminary and a reference point worldwide. I admire his God-fearing and the spirit of love which has caused him to help so many people.

Among a few who rose from very humble beginnings and by dint of hardwork, rose to the highest pivotal or zenith of their also careers is Chief Dr. Bashorun Joseph O. Sanusi, CON, a humble banking industry guru, who served two terms as Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria. He expressed gratitude to God by total commitment to St. John's Ogbagi as Baba Ijo.

In the same vein, Otunba Sunday Ehindero, the retired Inspector General of Police, served the nation and became Baba Ijo, St. John's Church, Oyin, and made a lot of contributions to the development of Oyin community.

Chief Dr. Olaiya Oni, a highly-principled man, retired as the Head of Service in Ondo State, and from being the chairman of a political party decided to be fully dedicated Baba Ijo to St. Sila's Church, Ise-Akoko. Barrister Afolabi Amure also retired as Permanent Secretary to build a Vicarage for his home Christ Church in Ifira.

Similarly, Chief Francis Babatunde Adefarati struggled after his late father-Catechist to become Chief Executive, Falcon Chemicals Ltd. He single-handedly built a modern Hall for the use of St. John's Church, Oka-Akoko.

These God-fearing people mentioned above set an example of maintaining good relations with their home churches

while they were working, and continued to support them after retirement. I decided to include these committed Christians in my memoir because their era brought a new dawn of selfless service to the entire Diocese. To celebrate would encourage others to follow suit.

All brother-Bishops of the Church of Nigeria, who had the opportunity to attend the computer Training of 2002 by Very Rev. Prof. D.A. Akinde, held at Chris Ogunbanjo Conference Centre in Erunwon, Ijebu Ode, and worshipped in the Epiphany Church, would always remember our exclamation, 'Oh look out, how magnificent!' The church which was single-handedly built by Chief Dr. Chris Ogunbanjo CON, was to express his faithful gratitude to God. It has become an object of admiration to all.

Chief Dr. Chris Ogunbanjo built the church, following divine instruction he received from God on a number of times. He followed these systematic revelations to put up the gigantic, imposing edifice. I was opportuned to have an interview with Papa Chris Ogunbanjo who told me, "It is gratitude that is said to be the best of all virtues, and that ingratitude is the worst of all vices."

Chief Ogunbanjo attributed his survival from armed robbery attack to divine intervention. He remembered the moral values and virtues his late father instilled in him. He also emphasised the moral influence his father shed on him and declared, "I did it in appreciation of all that God has done for me and the training my late father, Canon Daniel Ogunbanjo, gave me."

'The Cross, the Triumph and the Crown'

Another exemplar of faith was the author of the book titled above, Otunba Subomi Balogun, the christian layleader, and the 'Asiwaju of Onigbagbo of Ijebuland' (a titular equivalent of 'lay president of all christians in Ijebuland).

When I came across his memoirs, I felt fascinated and impressed to read the foreword to the book by Archbishop J. A.

Adetiloye, the former Primate of the Church of Nigeria. He described the Otunba as a 'person who was trained and who trained himself, and most importantly, it showed the efficacy of prayers in any good venture.'

Otunba Subomi Balogun himself acted what Archbishop Adetiloye said about him, "All I have achieved in life are God-given, ...my implicit faith in the Almighty God and my total submission to His will have been my greatest armour for which I am very grateful." he asserted.

He did not allow his wealth to conflict with his commitment to God's work. He built a Chapel of Eternal Grace, Otunba Tunwase Paediatric Centre, and awarded scholarships to hundreds of deserving students. He gave fund for rehabilitating the blind, and for taking care of the motherless babies, etc. He donated heavily to the building of Our Saviour's new Cathedral, Ijebu Ode. By his indiscriminate philanthropy, Otunba Subomi had sent a message to our society of many 'stinkingly rich' people who had little or no urge to give to the less privileged. He himself said, "If one is successful and wealthy, one had a corresponding duty of not enjoying the fruits of the endowments alone, but to share with others."

I decided to delve deep into the life of these people who were neither members of my Diocese, nor were they people with whom I had long-time direct dealings. My purpose was to make people know that wealth is a gift from God to be shared with others. The Otunba's statement is in the line with the mind of Christ who came to give us grace upon grace to share with others -the essence of Christianity.

God said, "The silver is mine, the gold is mine." (Hag. 2:8). Even though Paul did not covet anyone's silver or gold or clothing, he appreciated what church members gave to assist the work of evangelism. He told his Corinthian Church members: "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." (2 Cor.9:11).

For the rich to give time, thought, open their hearts, voices and use their possessions to build churches and vicarages, is the display of integrity that springs from the heart, which acknowledges that God is the giver of all things. In an age when many people are hardly satisfied with what they had and would do anything to acquire wealth, the church was fortunate to have members who gladly parted with their hard-earned money by giving to the poor and needy. Such an act of generosity is more efficacious than sermon.

Diocesan Silver Jubilee Celebration

Egba Diocese was inaugurated on August 3, 1976, and by the 3rd of August 2001, the Diocese celebrated her Jubilee anniversary with various activities, among which was the foundation laying of the multi-purpose hall. On the same site, other foundations for restaurant, guest house, and the gallery were laid by then President of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR, represented by Prof. Jerry Gana (Federal Minister for Information); former Head of State, Chief Dr. E.A.O. Shonekan GCFR, CBE, the State Governor, Chief Olusegun Osoba (the Akirogun of Egba) and the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Dr. Oyebade Lipede.

Construction work proper did not start on the Jubilee multi-purpose hall project until the year 2004, following the completion of the Bishop's court. The Provost, Very Rev. Akinde and I jointly developed the idea of the Hall. As characteristic of him, he quickly volunteered to arrange for the architectural design and module of the hall, which he secured through the generosity of Arch. Debo Adebo, free of cost. The interest and promptness with which Arch. Adebo handled the assignment was most encouraging, and even accelerated the process of the project beyond our own

expectation from the start. An Architectural design firm owned by Femi Majekodunmi prepared the details at no cost too.

Provost Akinde was most useful in the prosecution of the project, he was a man full of vision and genuine advice, a very dependable co-worker. He first served as the Chairman of the building committee who put all his resources and energy at the disposal of the work.

Engr. Layi Egbeyemi, a very young energetic engineer with appreciable idealism, was the first to help prosecute the project which he did with determination and zeal. He had a wonderful zeal for work, which he combined with a very impressive ability to mobilise and would not give in to disappointment, even in the face of challenges. He had seen and led us out of the dreary woods before he disembarked.

Following his consecration on Sunday 20th August, 2006, Provost Akinde was enthroned Bishop of Lagos Mainland Diocese on Wednesday 23rd August. God miraculously brought Ven. Engr. P.B. Oyebolu from Lagos to Abeokuta. Little did he himself know that God prompted him to come to Abeokuta after his retirement from the Diocese of Lagos West. When I appointed him chairman of the building committee, he gladly accepted. He was assisted by Engr. Okedara of St. Stephen's Church, Ilugun, who also worked with uncommon interest and zeal.

There was an unfortunate setback caused by the collapse of the roof. It was God's own doing that the lives of all the workers were spared! An incident which I will never forget to always thank God for. No miracle could be more convincing; that God was with us!

Even though this was very frustrating, but God used it to consolidate the work and our trust in Him. He raised our hope with the invitation of a team, professional engineers, by Ven. Oyebolu. In a very short time after, the work was back in full

swing. A little time later, the roof was done and we were ready to install air-conditioners in the hall. The estimated cost was frightening. We cried to God again, we did not know what to do or where to go.

Unexpectedly, and most surprisingly too, God brought the Primate all the way from Abuja. God guided the steps of Most Rev. P.J. Akinola to inspect the project incognito. I was shocked to meet him at the site uninvited! I told him my dilemma about the frightening cost of the installation. He allayed my fear by urging me to contact a company that could supply the air-conditioners on credit! Incredible! What had caused me sleepless nights! The following day, a representative of the company came and quoted for the ACs, – less than 70% of the previous frightening quotation. I invited the company for the installation at once and began to pay by installments. The Primate's directive was divinely brought and most helpful. God, in His inscrutable wisdom got the project completed and so the 2,500 capacity Jubilee Hall was commissioned by the Primate, the Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, assisted by the Archbishop of Ibadan province, the Most Rev. Joseph Akinfenwa, on March 9, 2008.

The marathon occasion attracted a mammoth crowd of attendants from all parts of Ogun State; the State Governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel was represented by his Chief of Staff, Chief Dr. Yomi Majekodunmi, all church denominations and many dignitaries from in and outside Ogun State. The celebration that marked the occasion was unprecedented in the annals of the Diocese. God's holy name be praised.

Since its inauguration, the Diocese had not had a hall that could seat more than sixty people at a time, with facilities for dining and modern conveniences. Moreover, our diocese needed a hall that could serve the needs of distant members, sons and daughters of Egba extraction and associates from

Lagos, Abuja, etc. who had taste for exotic reception centre services.

To the glory of God, the objectives analysed above were achieved, the entire psyche of the Diocese and the Onikolobo environment of the hall's geographical location, like an enclave, became suddenly transformed and launched into economic buoyancy. More still, users rushed to book the hall, and were ready to pay two hundred and fifty thousand naira (₦250,000.00)!

Surprisingly, when in August, 2009, our diocesan treasurer, wanted to book the hall for his daughter's wedding reception, he was shocked to learn that it had been fully booked, for the next five months and beyond! I learnt that increasing demand had caused the price to go up after my retirement in September 2009.

Pure Water Project

At the begining of the year 2009, and following the completion of the multi-purpose hall, I had the urge to embark on another economic project that had long been coming up in our Boards meetings.

Three things mainly challenged me to embark on the project executively. One was the church's economic emancipation drive, launched by the proactive and visionary Primate of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. P. J. Akinola, who had the common slogan: "When God gives a man a vision of what to do, the resources that he needs to achieve the vision are always there." The second was the encouragment I received from my wife, the President of Women's Organisations, to use women's block of four classrooms (that was not yet in use) to start, on the promise that I would build another to replace it before proceeding on retirement. I readily and gladly promised and God made my dream come true. God provided the resources

for the proposed water project for the Diocese. The third was the encouragement given by Mr. B. J. Olaniyan, a very experienced, proactive and energetic member from St James' Church, Ilugun. He and my hardworking, tireless and faithful chaplain, Rev (later Canon) Olutoyin Olayinka Olawale, addressed the project with all the resources at their disposal to achieve our objective. Within four months, with registered licence from Abuja, our pure water project was completed and commissioned during Synod on 28th April, 2009.

A block of four classrooms belonging to the Women's Organisations was later rebuilt and handed over to the women to their greatest amazement! It was another occasion for celebration by all the women because many had feared if it would be possible to have a replacement of the one we used. It was also a surprise to the entire synod when the water was served them at table.

With Comrade Jare Adefemi, a proactive man endowed by God with business acumen, as Chairman of Management Committee, Mr. B. J. Olaniyan and other gifted members on the Committee, the pure water project, duly registered and licensed, had become a major source of revenue for the Diocese, more profitable than the first venture of a Model School, and even more than that of multipurpose hall project. The pure water project was first of its kind (judging by its daily volume capacity of pure water production) in this part of Nigeria. To God be the glory for ever, Amen.

2006 Synod Theme – ‘Redeeming the Time’

Moved by the Spirit of God, the Holy Trinity Church, Ikereku-Olona, volunteered to host the Synod. Our theme was very appropriate to the situation and the need of the church to recover the time they had lost, especially in the area of evangelism.

Being one of the oldest churches in the Diocese, and judging by her richness in eminent human resources, Ikereku Holy Trinity Church stood the chance of leading the Diocese in many areas of evangelistic endeavour, and particularly in planting daughter-churches. The occasion of Synod provided a good opportunity of appealing to and enlisting the interest of their sons and daughters abroad in developing the home base.

The theme was also addressed to the Synod members to address the same issue of church planting with the same vigour and promptness. It was particularly targeted at members and churches whose attitudes were lukewarm towards evangelism, and especially to church-planting. People were urged to endeavour to redeem the time they had lost on one thing or another. The rate and zeal with which people readily welcomed the charge was commendable.

The effect of the charge was well felt by the host church as they went to plant a daughter church at Shaje area the following week. It also impacted on other churches as they doubled their efforts to plant more churches in all available spaces, an exercise that led to keen competition – scrambling for land to plant more churches!

2007 Synod Theme: ‘We are Called to be Missionary’

The above mentioned Synod theme was used in many Dioceses of the Church of Nigeria, and in fact, in the entire Anglican

Communion. The subject which came into limelight, following 1988 Lambeth Conference, served as a reminder of the original Great Commission of our Saviour (Mt.28) to go out and engage in the mission to all parts of our diocese in the spirit of the evangelistic drive that brought Christian faith to us in 1842.

Only a personal memory remains of how much I was challenged in my first year as a deacon when I first learnt of Ondo-Benin Diocesan Mission Area in Bassa- Ikomu, in 1965 during a recruitment drive for another missionary to go there. It gave me an inkling that my Diocese was toeing the line of the CMS which God inspired to bring the torch of Christian faith to Nigeria, among other nations. Even though I was not chosen by the Diocesan authority to replace the home-coming missionary, I had strong feeling for the mission field.

A booklet published by the second missionary to the area titled, "The Church in Bassa Ikomu" by Rev. E.A. Ogunsusi (later Archdeacon), made available by writer's daughter, Mrs. Adenike Omoyajowo, (wife of the retired bishop of Ijebu Diocese) gave me an insight into the mission. The first missionaries to Bassa Komu who volunteered to serve there, were Rev. Gabriel A. and Mrs. G.K. Oladetohun; they volunteered to go there because of their love for evangelism. Read what Bishop I. O. S. Okusanya, in his maiden episcopal Charge to the Third Session of the Fourth Synod of Ondo Diocese in April 1964 wrote:

"Mrs. G.K. Oladetohun, (wife of a volunteer-missioner, Rev. G.A. Oladetohun), died in Iwo Hospital after childbirth on November 30, 1963. Mrs. Oladetohun was a woman with missionary zeal. She worked whole-heartedly with her husband in Bassa-Komu area. Our sympathy also goes to the husband, who within the same year was bereft of his only son, a brother and his father."

Back from Bassa-Komu missionary journey, Rev Oladetohun later worked in many places before he was appointed Provost of Cathedral of St James, Ibadan, till his retirement.

The Rt. Rev. S.O. Odutola, accompanied by Ven. I. O. S. and Mrs. Julie Okusanya and Canons J. R. Oliver and E.A. Odusanwo founded the new mission for the Bassa-Komu on the 21st February, 1959. It later recorded its first casualty by the death of Mrs. Oni, who lost her life when the boat conveying women to a conference capsized; they did not lose heart but followed up by sending other missionaries. While Rev. T. Oni was withdrawn, the Rev. and Mrs. J.O. Oyeleye were commissioned to replace them. The latter came back later to pastor St Paul's Church, Okitipupa.

The years 1962 and 1963 brought a turning point to the story of the Diocesan missionary work in Bassa-Komu with the presence of Rev. and Mrs. E.A. Ogunsusi (later Ven. Archdeacon) as the missionary and Archdeacon A.O. Kolade in Lokoja. The progress report by the missionary, and the annual report by Ven. Kolade to the 1963 Synod showed that the spirit of giving was gaining ground everywhere. Mrs. L.B. Osanyin M. B. E. reported that the members in this area were very keen and always ready to help the church, despite their few membership. Ondo Diocese donated £1,668 13s 6d toward the mission work in Bassa-Komo area. The Bassa Nge Improvement Union in the far north sent £50 and £100 to save the maternity home at Akabe, from financial problems. All these are worthy of mention because evangelism is a fundamental duty of the church.

Mission - The Heart of the Church

Personally, I have learnt a lot of lessons and inspiration from such mission works as this, which served as true demonstration of seed-planting that has not only been watered by others, but

made to grow, and had yielded bountiful dividends by the grace of God. The churches and schools planted in the 'geographically remote villages and hamlets' (I am wary to say 'jungles') of Bassa-Komu land of those days, have today produced, not only giants of faith, among whom are bishops, archbishops, but also academic dons, political stalwarts, legal luminaries, etc, who at the time of writing this memoir, were leaders in various walks of life and whose leadership qualities are worthy of emulation.

Lokoja, the first and most strategic and popular town to receive the torch of the Christian faith, formed the base for reaching out to the hinterlands. Lokoja has appropriately become the Kogi State Capital, having narrowly missed being located as Federal Capital. But in the religious front, Lokoja, which had long been in touch with Christianity, made a historic imprint by producing one of the first martyrs of the Christian faith in Nigeria, in person of Walter Bako.

Bishop George Bako, an extraction of the same famous Bako family, was the first Bishop of Lokoja Diocese. George Bako was an itinerant Bishop, an epitome of selfless service who worked to meet much of his diocesan obligation personally. His soul was inspired with passionate desire for evangelism, reaching out to the remote towns and villages, distributing gifts to the poor to fulfil the work of an evangelist. Bishop Bako began to build an ultra-modern Cathedral to mark the zenith of his ten-year (18th Oct. 1994-19th Oct. 2004) long episcopacy. Soon after his retirement, his successor, Bishop Emmanuel E. S. Egbunu was elected Archbishop and Lokoja became provincial headquarters.

Among very prominent and outspoken members of the old Ondo-Benin Diocese were the Lakpinis, the Abenemis, the Ajakpos, the Ales, etc. who became university dons, popular politicians, doctors, archbishops, directors-General, etc. The

former Archbishop of Kaduna, Most Rev. Idowu Fearon as at the time of writing this memoir, the Archbishop of Lokoja, the Most Rev. Emmanuel Egbunu, (one of the most humble, unassuming spiritual servants of God in the Church of Nigeria), were products of the faith planted in Lokoja.

The ministry given us by God through Jesus Christ is a world-wide ministry. Servants or ministers of God must not be conservative or narrow-minded about it. Did Bishops Odutola, Awosika, and Okusanya, who in succession supported Bassa-Komu Mission ever know that such heroes of faith would emerge from their cooperative efforts as God's fellow-workers? (2 Cor. 6:1). The eternal light is shed in our hearts with various forms and richness to enable us see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

My reader may wonder, what has my autobiography got to do with the old Diocesan Missionary Society (D.M.S.) of Ondo? A lot. As a product of the generation that attached importance to rural evangelism and to the establishment of mission activities, I was affected, influenced and concerned about the trends of events of that age. People who knew and were close to Bishop I.O.S. Okusanya would remember him for his discipline, love of education and commitment to evangelism. Most of the clergy who received his training and orientation also exhibited these traits.

Traditionally, Christians in one part of the world regard themselves to be one with others in another part. The art of caring, sharing and giving makes fellowship sweet and Christ-like; it makes givers and recipients-alike owe a common allegiance to a Master and that they are both brothers and sisters in the faith – one Lord, one faith, one baptism. All men belong to God who would have all to be saved. By this, the church is blessed to bring the Gospel to all people.

I guess this spirit motivated Primates J. A. Adetiloye and P. J. Akinola as they traveled across the length and breadth of the country and saw a vast unchurched isolated areas to embark on operation ‘Missionary Diocese.’ They also gave the cheering impression that the Church of Nigeria was passing through a phase of the ‘fastest growing church’ in its history. This claim led to ‘operation planting missionary dioceses’ – a syndrome that witnessed a near competitive rush.

2007 – A Year of Relinquishments

On Tuesday 6th February, 2007, the standing committee of the Church of Nigeria, sitting in Sokoto, approved the creation of the Diocese of Egba-West and the Missionary Diocese of Ifo, from the Diocese of Egba. We, the Egba Diocese, doused the fear that we would not be viable, with the two areas carved out, and also with our waiver of their indebtedness to us.

Following this decision, on Monday 12th March, 2007, the Missionary Diocese of Ifo was inaugurated, after signing the Deed of Relinquishment; while the following month, Sunday 22nd April, the Diocese of Egba West was also inaugurated after signing the Deed of Relinquishment.

In Egba Diocese, we took this as a challenge, and on Tuesday 22nd May, set up a restructuring committee which came up with more archdeaconries than when the two dioceses had not been carved out. A new spirit of healthy ‘rivalry’ (unusual competition) overwhelmed the entire archdeaconries. Assessments rolled in as never before! Surprisingly, Egba Diocese became financially stronger than when we were together. “*Egba Ogbangba ti ngbani lojo isoro, E se o*” (Thank you Egba people for coming to rescue on the day of trouble).

2007 SYNOD – ‘We are Called to be Missionaries’

The theme for the Synod hosted by St. James’ Church, Housing Estate, Ita-Elega was very challenging and interesting to the members. All the members felt a compelling call to be missionaries. A young church, but fast growing spiritually and physically, doubled up efforts to plant more daughter-churches. Prince (Engr.) Yinka Gbadebo, as soon as he was anointed Baba Ijo, became remarkably inspired and embarked on great feat for the church. Under his able leadership, the church planted a daughter-church, christened ‘St. David’s church,’ Bode-Olude, Abeokuta. It was single-handedly built by him and handed over to the Diocese for dedication.

Prince Yinka Gbadebo was a leader with dauntless spirit and desire to work for the Lord. He was ready to spend and be spent to propagate the gospel. Through his effort which mobilized his members, St. James’s Church soon became an Archdeaconry headquarters. During this time, the same spirit of missionary endeavour urged Chief Mrs. Alaba Lawson, another lover of evangelism, to single-handedly build St. Peter’s Church, Bara, in Orile-Imo Archdeaconry. On its completion, she handed it over to the Diocese for dedication.

In the same vein, Chief J. B. Oke single-handedly re-roofed Emmanuel Church, Keesi, and donated a handsome amount of money to the church to defray its assessment. Through his inspiration and support, the church became an Archdeaconry headquarters. Chief Oke, Chairman of AG Leventis provided scholarships for some Egba indigens. He also donated generously towards Diocesan projects. As a result of their dedication, Chief Mrs. Oke was installed the Iya-Ijo of Emmanuel Church, Keesi, and they had a living Chapel in their house.

The Holy Spirit also moved many more people to do one great thing or the other to show their missionary interest and zeal. St. Peter’s Church vicarage, Ilogbo-Olofin was single-handedly built by the Rt. Rev. Dr. and Mrs. S.O.M. Adebola,

who in addition had made many contributions to the physical and spiritual development of the Diocese. He and his wife gave us encouraging and inspirational counsel. The Bishop and his wife took special interest in the church of his parents, remotely located in Ajebo Archdeaconry.

About this time, an Abeokuta-based member of St. Peter's Church, Odo-Ijesha, Architect Segun Ogunseye, an enthusiastic, spiritually-charged evangelist, also re-built the church. He was a man full of zeal and faith for God's work.

The Baba Ijo of St. Paul's Church, Sokan, Chief I. O. Oloyede built the church and completed it for decoration on October 10, 2009, while that of St. David's Church, Bode-Olude, was dedicated on October 11, 2009.

The Church of the Living Faith, Idi-Aba, was built within one year, under the lay-leadership of Chief A. Adeboye, the Oluwo of Egba, a member of St Jude's Church, Oke-Jeun, who mobilised the few members of the church. The emergence of the church was a fulfilment of the undying aspiration of Evangelist (Dr.) Tayo Popoola, who with her late husband, Rev. (later Ven.) Gbolahan Popoola had desired earnestly to found a church located in Idi-Aba area. The relic was therefore overjoyed to witness the fulfillment of their dream and she gladly supported the launch of the church financially. To the glory of God, it was completed within a year.

The Holy Spirit also inspired Chief Dr. Olu Shonoiki to build a church in the spirit of evangelism. His desire coincided with our intent and purpose to found a new church at Elite Club area, Idi-Aba. The foundation of the church was laid on Monday 19th October, 2009. It was done at the insistence of Chief Shonoiki before we proceeded on retirement.

Chief Shonoiki, who was later installed Baba Ijo of Christ Church, Ijemo, promised to build the church by his single effort. He was a man who had burning desire for the spread of the

Gospel. The church foundation-laying ceremony we gladly performed on the eve of our departure was our last episcopal duty.

According to the appendices attached to 'The Episcopacy of The Rt. Rev. Matthew O. Owadayo' by Egba Diocese, there were thirty-six new churches, sixty-six new foundations of churches, vicarages and turning of the 'first-sod', and eighty-two dedications done between 1995 and 2009. These were areas where the people practically committed their resources and efforts to the success story of our ministry.

There were other areas of our ministry where people made their talents, skills and wisdom available, which served as tonic to stimulate our strength and interest. The collective efforts and team spirit of the entire people within and from outside the Diocese formed a bulk of ministry that filled the block of time and space of our episcopal ministry, between February 1995 and October 2009, entrenched in the annals of Egba Diocese.

'TAP' (Train A Priest)

This Scheme which we launched at one of our earliest Synods received a warm acceptance of the Synod. It continued to enjoy the financial support of the people till the time of our retirement. The first person to support this purposeful scheme was Engr. Dr. O. Obadina who was based in Ibadan, an extraction of the Obadina family of faith of Arigbajo-Ifo. He was an enthusiastic lover of evangelism who even though not a Synod delegate, cheerfully and generously donated money on two occasions for the programme. Comrade Jare Adefemi and many others followed suit.

Chief Dr. Olusegun Osunkeye OON, donated five hundred thousand naira (N500,000) to support the programme. He gave a scholarship to a recommended seminary student up to university level. Chief Mrs. Osunkeye similarly donated one

million naira (₦1m.) towards the 'Train A Priest' (TAP) programme on attaining the golden age of sixty years. The Osunkeyes were very friendly and committed to the Diocese and generously donated money toward the multi-purpose hall, apart from fervently supporting every move to advance the course of evangelism through preachers and their training.

The faithful supporters of the 'TAP' should be appreciated as being spiritually oriented and ready to fulfil the mind of Christ who said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few..." (Matt. 9). There are increasing needs for church workers everyday; they cannot be too many in any generation. Some people are erroneously saying that "workers are more than the harvest"! This in essence means that there is over production of workers. People with this idea are not only conservative, narrow-minded, but short-sighted and ignorant of the Lord's mind of 'His harvest field.' The Ministry into which Jesus Christ has called us to, is not the nuclear ministry of white collar alone, it is a ministry that is to cover all walks of life.

Theological education is expensive; the laity should therefore be made to appreciate and support it. People who kindly support the 'Train- a-Priest' scheme should be commended as it happens in advanced countries.

Music Ministry

We appropriate music as an indispensable part of worship because all through history, human experience shows that there is value in music. King David was a great lover and composer of music, by which he made vital contributions to enrich worship. In our ministry, we encouraged choruses to make service livelier. The Diocesan Association of Organists formed a Diocesan choir under the leadership of Chief Dr. Olumide Kuti with Chief Taiwo as Assistant Diocesan Organist-often referred to as 'Pastor Taiwo' in charge of music. Different

church choirs soon showed appreciable innovative achievements by producing albums which were launched and which brought them into popular demand. Some lyrics reflected genuine emotions and expression of Bible stories.

We nevertheless planned to introduce the teaching of Church Music in our model school (OSMAS) syllabus. The Old Boys Association members of the defunct St. Paul's Teachers' College, under the leadership of Chief Sogbesan of Emmanuel Church, Keesi, donated one hundred thousand naira (₦100,000.00) to kick-start a Music School for the Diocese. The plan had good intentions, part of which was to recover and appreciate the value of church music that was going into a moribund state. The church cannot afford to lose such a golden heritage, a veritable vehicle for evangelism.

The Diocesan Magazine

It has been said earlier that there were other professionals who put their God-given talents at the disposal of the Diocese at very little or no cost at all. Our Diocesan Magazine was regularly published by 'Gbemi Sodipo Printing Press.' Chief Gbemi Sodipo himself first served as Chairman of the Diocesan Editorial Board for years. Gbemi (as fondly called), was often ready to serve actively in many other areas of the Diocesan endeavours. He was succeeded as the chairman of the Editorial Board by Chief Tunde Adeyanju JP, who also was a prolific writer and Managing Director of Litany (Nigeria) Ltd (Educ. Publishers). He was a retired senior civil servant. He too worked tirelessly for the spread of the gospel. He was still the chairman when we retired.

Through the combined efforts of the board, with the advisory assistance of Bishop (later Archbishop) A.D. Akinde, we published the History of Christianity in Egbandaland, authored by Ven. Prof. Olayiwola, a Professor of Religious Studies,

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. It was also published by Gbemi Printing Press. The Diocesan Synod of 2008 had it launched by the Diocesan Historian, Chief Sesan Soluade, who did it so impressively, that many Synod delegates and church members proudly purchased copies for themselves and for their churches.

Medical Welfare for the Clergy

We trusted God to give us good health to do the mission work He assigned us. As human beings, we are prone to natural hazards such as malaria attack (common tropical disease) which could do incalculable damage to our health and affect our performance at duty. We thus had a medical team to attend to the health problems of the clergy, their wives and children, and other lay workers too. The Diocese of Egba gave priority attention to the health of its workers because, without enjoying good health, they would not perform.

We established a Diocesan four-bedroom clinic with four certificated nurses on full-time appointment, working under the diocesan medical management committee, headed by a London-trained Surgeon, and one time Ogun-State Commissioner for Health, Chief Dr. Akin Majekodunmi, with Mrs. Yinka Olubajo, (an experienced, retired Physiotherapist) as secretary. We planned to have the clinic metamorphose to a Diocesan Hospital. In the Medical team, we had Doctors D.O. Ogunseinde (a consultant), Kunle Obadina (also a consultant), Dr. Prince Oluremi Fagbenro, Dr. O. Feyisitan, Yemi Ajibawo, Ajayi among others; these Christian doctors were ready to be called anytime and they worked efficiently at no cost. This Clinic

was of immense service to our model school, OSMAS, with a growing population of well over five hundred students.

There was a time the Diocese took up the case one of its clergy – Rev. S.O. Ewetade, who was attacked by armed robbers, between Wasimi and Ifo and left half-dead. I nearly fainted when I looked at him in his pool of blood at Sokenu State Hospital. Our Chief Medical Adviser, Dr. Akin Majekodunmi quickly came to my aid. The Diocese, Churches and individual members generously donated money to transfer him to the UCH, Ibadan. Our joy and testimonies knew no bounds months later when on Sunday 26th April, 1997, we did a grand thanksgiving service at St.Mary’s Church, Ijaye, to mark his discharge.

The Miracle at St. Nicholas Hospital, Lagos

God gave us the wonderful grace of good health to work in Egba Diocese. For eight years, except for malaria fever, we had no cause to see the doctor. But when God wanted us to know something about the above named hospital, my wife (fondly called Mama-Egba) suddenly fell sick. This time, the malaria attack defied treatment at Dr. Afonja’s Specialist Hospital, Abeokuta, for three days. That was the first time she was admitted in any hospital since our arrival in Abeokuta. By the third day, it worsened. Someone reminded me of Baba Majekodunmi’s hospital in Lagos. Immediately I called him, he answered and asked,

“Your wife?”

“Yes Sir,” I answered.

“Bring her at once,” he ordered.

After obtaining a referral, and with the heavy rain, rough road, traffic hold-up, etc, we got to Lagos by 8pm. And by that time, we had almost lost hope. She was already unconscious when Busayo and I carried her into a doctor’s consulting-room.

On opening the door of the consulting room was the doctor who had been waiting since 3pm! It was Dr. Ebun Bamgboye, whom we were meeting for the first time. The doctor told us to excuse him and we politely moved out. He went into action at once with series of treatments.

In another thirty minutes, she, who was dying, to the astonishment of everyone, came back to life. Had we failed to reach the hospital that day, the story would have sadly been different. Treatment continued in the ward and by the following morning, God had performed His miracles through the hands of Dr. Ebun Bamgboye, to save an ebullient life that was ebbing away!

Later, we met other doctors and nurses who performed efficient and impressive health services. One was Dr. O.A. Fadiran, a gifted surgeon. The two doctors: Dr. E. Bamgboye and Dr. O.A. Fadiran, were like Bezalel and Oholiab, whom God chose in the Bible, gave them His Spirit and endowed them with special talents which distinguished them from among ordinary men (Ex. 31:1-11; 35:30-35). These two doctors mentioned were similarly blessed with the Spirit of God, humility and special skills for medical healing. They were loving, caring, and had good human relations desired by patients in their time of dire need. The diligence and intelligence with which these doctors addressed their delicate duties posed a challenge to many hospital workers in the country. No wonder they had a lot of people always demanding for their services!

The hospital was the achievement of the life ambition of Chief Dr. Moses Adekeye Majemikodunmi (the Otun of Egband and one time Administrator of the old Western State of Nigeria) to make it a model. The hospital is one of the best in Nigeria in terms of efficient services, sense of responsibility and dedication to duty of its doctors, nurses and other workers.

Chief Dr. M.A. Majekodunmi, the Chairman of the Hospital, still had both emotional and sentimental attachment to it. He was very selective in appointing personnel to work in the hospital. This was responsible for the high standard of quality attained in the hospital.

Clergy – Co-workers with God

Some of the numerous people whom God used to bring joy to our ministry in Egba were members of the big ‘Team Ministry’, who formed the cream of those called Clergymen who had been trained for the work. These clergymen and their wives were servants of God without whom we would not have worked successfully in Egbaland. With them God gave us the grace to work together for nearly fifteen years.

There is no substitute for training. These well-trained ministers of God worked hard and whole-heartedly for the progress of the Diocese, and for their individual churches. God called them from different backgrounds and seminaries. Among them were experienced lawyers, engineers, professors, civil servants, graduate teachers, etc. Some had never had any training after secondary education. We made them undergo full seminary training and they became accredited parish priests.

I had many years of training men and women for the sacred ministry. While I was the Dean of the Seminary, I had the grace of admitting an ardent lawyer-candidate, for the first time, into the ordination course. Some on the interview panel raised objection. I was very happy when the list passed through the episcopal interview, unopposed. To God’s praise, at the time of writing this memoir, he was one of those who had been called into the episcopate.

Training Clergy-wives

My wife, being a teacher all her life, and also experienced in women's parish-work in different dioceses, was particularly interested in the sacred duty of teaching the clergy-wives on their role in church ministry, most especially those whose husbands had not yet been called to the ordained ministry before they were married. They were not close to church ministry and least expected that they would one day be called 'Mama-Yard' (Parsonage Mistress). Such clergy-wives did not know much about the duty expected of them. They were not only embarrassed, but bitter to see their husbands transferred, because they did not expect that their husbands could be transferred to any station.

A bishop's wife who teaches them should be equipped anyway, because they and their children, and at times, their jobs are invariably affected. Clergy-wives' school, seminar and training workshop would help to prepare them and their minds for such eventualities. In some cases, unexpected transfers always generate sharp reactions and disagreements. One can only imagine the inherent complications that would arise, were the teacher herself not experienced or knowledgeable enough to handle such cases with mature touch!

Transfers are never strange with clergy, no matter how long or short the notice may be, except they come with preferment. In the Seminary, ordinands were taught and encouraged never to reject transfer, but ever remember that they were called by God, not man. There were cases where churches had a stake in the transfer of their workers; they created problem for such workers.

I remember one instance when a young bachelor-priest was transferred as a curate under an archdeacon to pastor a growing village church in an industrial area. A strong protest against his transfer came from the church elders because he

had impacted on the youths. I invited and asked him if he would like to stay because of the youths. He stammered. I said, "My friend, you must report and preach at that station unfailingly next Sunday." I guess he went away unhappily.

Six months later, the young priest, now village-church Vicar, came to my office and said, "My lord Bishop, I am happy to inform you that a distant member of my church, a Permanent Secretary, bought me a car last Sunday." Congratulations. "You are now happy?" I replied.

By our calling, the Bishop and clergymen are co-workers with God, the owner of the ministry. We are called to be 'good and faithful servants' (Mt. 25:21). We had the grace of God to engender love, harmony and mutual co-existence among them. We were privileged to shepherd these young up-coming ministers of God, sharing their joys, sorrows and difficulties. Our team ministry work shows that no one can be successful without the help of others. The clergy and their wives were a source of inspiration, joy and encouragement to us.

Moments of Grief

The Cramp in the Hand

Someone who felt concerned about the 'cramp,' asked, "What have you done to the cramp in your hand?" I simply answered: "Not what I have done to it, but what it has done to me. It has made me to know more about the grace of God."

The story of this cramp stretches across the history of my life, from the time I declared to be Christ's disciple, even when I had not done anything to attract the devil's attention. My passion for God's work made me decide to go into the ministry early in life. It prevailed over my fear of the devil's machinations that came my way.

At every stage, God brought assistance to alleviate my suffering and the effect of the cramp on my work, most especially when writing my Ph.D thesis in Jos. My wife readily served a lot to take my dictation, while her niece, Funke Dare, another fast-writer, (later wife of Mr. Ade Ayoko, Nigerian Ambassador to Switzerland at the time of writing this memoir) also helped a great deal. When I began writing the memoir however, computer has replaced the tasking manual recording.

God has His reasons for allowing His children to undergo sufferings, trials, tests and even persecutions. In 2 Cor. 1:4-5:

"...the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."

One can only help others in proportion to what one has suffered. I met a Professor of Theology, Rev. Daniel Wambutda and Rev. Fr. Dr. E.E. Metuh, at the University of Jos who both told me that their hand-writing was so bad that reading over what they had written was illegible for them.

As I went through these bitter experiences, believing fervently in Christ, His life flows through me to others. He helps them look beyond the hardships to discover the jewels that lie just beneath the surface of their suffering and understand its theology. All that I have needed not to give up but to press on in distress and hardships, is the grace of God. (2 Cor.12:10).

Armed-robbers' Visits

Our ministry in Egbaland, as impressive as it was, witnessed some sad experiences. The attack of armed robbers in the night on two occasions: Thursday 29th February-Friday 1st of March, 1996 mid-night and Sunday 23rd to 24th of May, 2004. On the two occasions, our old Bishops court and the new one were riddled with bullets.

When Ogun State Military Administrator, Col. Daniel Akintonde, paid a sympathy visit to me on Saturday 2nd February, 1996, he was surprised to find the ammunition the armed-robbers used to rob bishop's house!

At the first visit, they gained entry and collected our belongings – cash, clothes, pectoral crosses, trinkets, etc. Like when God shut the mouths of ravenous lions to prevent them from hurting biblical Daniel, so He saved us from being hurt when they threatened us with guns and cutlass. They spent hours in our house on that fateful occasion! The second time, they attempted, but could not gain entry. God was faithful to His promise. Chief E.O. Sodunke and Chief Tayo Falode came to our rescue.

We actually "walked through fire, we were not burned; the flames did not set us ablaze" (Isa.43:2); '...we indeed walked through the valley of the shadow of death...' (Ps.23).

The Fire incident that Nearly Marred the Legal Year Service

On Monday 4th October, 2004, as I was preparing to go for the Legal Year Service scheduled for 10.00a.m, there was an alarm of fire! fire!! raised by a passer-by in front of the New Bishop's court at about 8am. Before we knew what was happening, smoke had covered the entire house. I was trapped upstairs and only managed to escape, groping my way downstairs barefooted! The fire-brigade arrived later, but it had already destroyed the living room upstairs where it started. The cause was attributed to what a repairman had done there the previous day. God saved us from that fire incidence.

At the close of the Legal Year Service, the Governor, the Chief Judge, Judges and Lawyers joined me in thanksgiving at the altar. Immediately after the service, even before I got home, Governor Gbenga Daniel, the State Chief Judge, Oluremi Jacobs, and a few others, had gone to see the burnt room. The Governor kindly got it repaired.

Grieving Petitions and Allegations

When the press interviewed me two weeks to my retirement, some of their questions centred on the above, among other difficulties that we encountered. Our ministry, not only in Egbaland, but particularly as from the time of our climbing the higher echelons of the church hierarchy, began to witness series of allegations.

False allegations and petitions are common to both public and private establishments. In secular institutions like the Civil Service, higher places of learning and companies, allegations and petition-writing are the stock-in-trade. The church in our time witnessed these features, based on unfounded rumours, intrigue, nepotism, envy or prejudice. Such allegations or petitions were often intended to blackmail the alleged in order

to prevent him from reaching the top by preferment / promotion or getting him transferred, so that the king-pin or 'brain' behind the plot can occupy the eyed-office. They were not totally free from hypocrisy and conspiracy theory.

Many a good man has been destroyed or denied election into high office on the false allegation of an (non-existing chronic) illness or figment of some undisclosed fault or weakness. Before such lies were known to the unsuspecting members of the decision-making body at the boardroom, 'the die had been cast!' The innocent victim remains in his limbo.

In my ministry, whether in Immanuel College of Theology as Dean or in Egba Diocese as Bishop, rumours or insinuations did not cease. I was in the midst of the sea, tossed by the storm outside; but my worry, my fear subsided, there was peace and calm inside me.

Eye-witnesses of such cases (some of whom had been elected Bishops, preferred Archdeacons, or Lawyers appointed S.A.N.) are alive at the time of writing this memoir.

The Primate of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Peter J. Akinola wonderfully surprised me when I went to him with a written defence against some allegations: "My Bishop", he said, "I don't deal with rumours or anonymous letters. They are rubbish and are trash for waste paper basket." He refused to take the letter from me, let alone read it.

When the late Alake of Egbaland, Oba Oyebade Lipede, heard that I planned to swear before the altar and the episcopal throne in the presence of the Cathedral congregation, he knew how hurt I was, over-reacting to rumours, he sent for me. I went with my wife, only to learn more wisdom from him. The octogenarian monarch handed me a letter containing words of wisdom that I have kept in my mind.

One amusing strange aspect of these allegation-makers, petition-writers or rumour-mongers, was that a few years after

leaving Immanuel College, Ibadan, and after my retirement from Egba, some confessions came with letters of apology, claiming to have been misguided, instigated, to clique and blackmail. They confessed holding nocturnal meetings, colluding with even important close associates!

Conscience! Conscience! Conscience!

It is the referee of every man's life.

It blows foul at the sight of evil done.

It becomes stiff when ignored.

Moment of Tears

God is the caretaker of His ministers. The loss of a servant of God is very painful. The Psalmist rightly said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Ps. 116:15).

We believe that Christians are pilgrims, journeying through the world with spiritual ministration. The most trying moment for us was any time we lost anyone of our ministers. We provided adequate health welfare services for the clergy, wives and children. If there was any accidental case, the Diocese, churches and members of the diocese were always ready to come to the assistance of the victim. Our members who formed a team of medical doctors were often ready to attend to sick clergies, their wives and children.

Sometimes, we experienced the painful loss of some of our dear fellow workers.

Singing the Hymns Ancient and Modern 354 stanza 4:

"Rest comes at length: though life be long and dreary...,"

‘But this one was short and sadly dreary, why has the rest come so soon...?’ my mind queried the writer.

With the refrain of:

“... Angels of Jesus, angels of light, singing to welcome the pilgrims...”

This moving hymn lead me up the pulpit to preach the funeral sermon of a much loved, faithful, hardworking minister, who had a bright ministerial future but was suddenly mowed down by death. This was the saddest duty I performed in my episcopal ministry. I struggled, but the tears rolling down my cheeks were irresistible! Not many a bishop would have successfully resisted being overwhelmed in such an emotional climate.

We first lost Rev. Gbolahan Popoola, who, with his wife was helping to found a church at Idi-Aba. Some years later, we lost Rev. Gad Sobowale, who with his wife, had helped to found St. Barnaba’s church, Olokemeji, and moved to pastor St. Michael Church, Obantoko. After some years, we lost Rev. Canon Dimeji Arawole, who with his wife had just worked tirelessly to complete All Souls’ Church, Ibara Housing Estate.

These non-stipendiary servants of God were great evangelists who served appreciably with their wives and made remarkable achievements within their few years in church ministry. In appreciation of their faithful and selfless services, God put it in our hearts to honour them at our 2009 Diocesan Synod by preferring them posthumously as ‘Archdeacons.’

Their respective wives, Evangelist (Dr.) Tayo Popoola, Evangelist Florence Sobowale and Evangelist (Engr.) Mrs. Arawole displayed faith and courage of very rare stuff which were unparalleled and soul-lifting. While many were sobbing, these women of faith hopefully sang songs of victory with total surrender and trust in God. Sorrow truly may tarry till night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Glorious Exit

Everywhere we ministered, parting with our members had always been painful and shedding tears of affection became unavoidable. The farewell service marking our send-off by the Diocese of Egba on Sunday 18th October, 2009, witnessed such a mammoth crowd that was unparalleled in the chain of send-off in our ministry! To gaze from the pulpit on the faces of our admirers, friends, dear parishioners drawn from all parts of and from outside the diocese, was most moving. And to wave them 'goodbye' was most emotionally evocative. I decided to say 'good-bye' to the great flock, to whom we had ministered these past nearly fifteen years brought irresistible moment laden with sadness.

What however gladdened my heart was the presence of our former Provost, now the Rt. Rev Emmanuel Oludaisi Adekunle, and his wife to replace us. Their coming was soothing as they would ably continue with some of the projects in place for continued spiritual and economic emancipation of the Diocese.

We thank God who guided our feet and equipped us for the spiritual life journey which took us to different parts of

this great country of Nigeria, and in fact to other parts of the world. Some of the places we visited, or worked in, and various personalities we met, shed some influence on our lives. It was a great blessing too that God was with us all through the exciting journey, part of which formed our missionary journey to Egbaland.

Renowned Leaders' Literary Influence

Very importantly, God made me to come across and acquire courage and lasting impression from the autobiography of some world characters. It is helpful to recall the sayings or writings of just one or two of them.

In 'the memoir and memories' of Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin, the erstwhile Governor of Ondo State, he said among other things:

"... We are all like passengers in a ship that finds itself in the middle of a turbulent sea; whether it will be blown towards the shores or far, far into the deep blue sea, only God Almighty can tell, I do know that nothing happens which God has not foreseen, permitted or arranged from all eternity and that it is God who chooses what we go through while we choose how we go through it."

As we have said again and again, we believe that divine providence brought us to Egbaland and brought right people across our life path at the right time, providing us with the right resources. Each day, each time, three times a day, we called on Him at our family altar in the name of 'JESUS' which has been given us, and which is above all other names, and He truly acted (Psalm 50:15) and will do till eternity.

In all places where we worked, it was our choice to be at peace and to show affection to all, indiscriminately. In some cases, when we experienced opposition, we chose to show friendliness. God led us to where we were, but we chose how to live there.

God gave us the grace to work in many places and among many people. Of all whom we were opportuned by God to work with, the humility, regard and respect that Egba people had for ministers of God is exceptional. In addition, they gave us what is more than material, their faithful and moral support, their love with affection. The Egba people understand that their respect for the minister is the respect for God. So both old and young, male and female, imbibe this attitude. It behoves ministers of God whom He assigns to serve there to reciprocate the kind gesture of their characteristic and cultural dispositions.

In the light of the above observation, St. Paul's admonition is most apt for all purposes and in every context. In his first letter to the Corinthian believers, he said among other things:

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; ...the weak to shame the strong...so that no-one may boast before Him." (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

God brought us to know Jesus; His love, His care and to nurse the minds of thousands for the hope and riches of the glorious inheritance to which we are called. We are called to a life of humility, patterned on the conduct of Jesus Christ, by which our ministry can be effective.

How can we forget...?

How can we forget where God has brought us from, the way He led us through, the bundle of bumps on our spiritual journey, the people whose hearts are warm and inspired to help us, to think about us, even when we were not there, both lay and clergy, those who prayed for us when we did not know, who counselled us lest we went astray, who encouraged us when low in spirit. How can I forget enemies' subtle plans to cause our fall and gloat over it; how can I forget people like Bishop Emman Egbunu (later Archbishop) who, at one Episcopal Bible study (at Agbarha Otor) inspired and actually 'ignited' me among others, when he charged:

"Start to write, do not delay, do not wait till you are perfect, no man is ever perfect,...Man himself is not a perfect but raw material of human life, not a finished product...do not expect perfection."

How can I forget how humbled and challenged I was, when the same Bishop Emmanuel Egbunu, with sincere humility, turned down the offer of archbishopric in preference of his equally humble brother, Bishop Daniel Yisa of Minna Diocese; an offer that many would snatch with little heed. How can I forget Bishop Jacob Ajetunmobi's touching sermon at Ajido Whispering Psalms, 2005 Episcopal Retreat:

"I don't want to be like president, primate, ...anybody, I only want to be like Jesus."

We were not perfect in the ministry assigned us by God. He caused us to come across many inspiring lives of faith, both lay and cleric, which in turn instilled courage, hope and the fear of God in us. In the words of Bill Clinton, one time

President of the United States of America, "We were graced beyond measure by God."

And to Him, therefore, Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:20.)

The Family God Has Given Me

Now at 75, I have a sober, quiet and deep retrospection over this vast solid period of fifty years in the ministry of the Church. I dreamt of the ministry, interpreted it and embarked on the praxis, singly trusting absolutely in God for its fruition. I first shared the dream with my fiancée, Eunice Olufunmilayo Ademuyiwa, who expressed her pleasure. She later consented to be led down the aisle in her father's arms into mine at the altar in holy wedlock.

We had our first son the following year, who was at St. Peter's Church, Ile-Oluji, christened Olufemi Ayodeji Olugboyega Olujisanmi, by Canon (later Ven.) M.A. Olupona.

My wife was heavily pregnant when the Biafran War drove us away from Our Saviour's Church, Odigbo. In the event, she was later delivered of a baby girl who was christened Opeyemi, by Canon (later Very Rev) T.A. Olumakaiye, at the All Saints' Church Ogbonkowo – Ondo.

God blessed us with a second baby girl in 1972 at the Archbishop Vining Training Centre, Akure, where I was Men's Warden. She was at the Training Centre Chapel christened Olusola Titilayo, by Archdeacon D.O. Okunfulure.

God blessed us with two more children when we were in Ibadan for postgraduate studies – a boy, Oluwabusayo, and another girl, Abimbola.

Femi and Ope (as the two eldest were fondly called) in Abadina Central Primary School (with Chief Mrs E. J. A. Kuyebi as headmistress) gained admission to Federal Government Colleges, Jos and Langtan respectively. Sola, who was too impatient to start schooling as an under-age, was lucky to be allowed by Mrs. A. E. Gbonigi in her class so as to make her comfortable, soon gained admission to the FGC, Jos.

We faced an uneasy task of training three children simultaneously in three different universities (Benin, Lagos and Ibadan). It was like living in a threshold of joy and sorrow – the pride of having three kids in universities at the same time and the hassle of meeting the attendant financial cost of their long expensive courses.

Worse still, Sola was not spared the hard luck that befell her when she came briefly to us in Ikare for fees. We heard on air the sad news that her Hall (Queen Elizabeth, University of Ibadan) was on fire! She rushed back to Ibadan only to find that she had lost all her personal effects, except her credentials that were saved by her roommate. All she was left with were the clothes on her to Ikare. Thanks to the Mobil Oil Company, Nigeria, which gave her bursary award, and Otunba Ayo Oladunni who also helped her greatly.

Eunice, my wife, was very helpful, by supporting me to share our hard-earned stipend among the children every month. The children were very understanding and hardworking. Femi and Ope are at the time of writing these memoirs, Computer analyst, based in London and Consultant Pharmacist in Nigeria respectively. Ope and Dr. Segun Kayode, (Psychiatrist) her husband are civil servants in Nigeria with their children, while Femi, and Toyin his wife, are residing in London with their children.

Sola, a Dental Surgeon, worked for two years in State Hospital in Lagos before proceeding to Cape Town University, South Africa, for her postgraduate studies. She is academically ambitious and restless. After that, she went to Aberdeen University, did Master's degree in Internal Health Management with merit. She was invited back to defend her merit which she did successfully but she refused to stay for the doctorate. Back to her husband, Mr. Segun Adeoye, (Director of his own company) and children, Sola works with a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). With a master stroke, she achieved part of her insatiable academic ambition.

Aggrieved that their schooling was initially interrupted and badly affected by our frequent transfers from Ibadan to Jos, then to Akoko and back to Ibadan again –within a decade, Busayo and Bimbo later sought to make up. They graduated from Babcock University the same year; worked for three years and traveled to the UK for their master's degrees. Busayo went to Durham University for Computer Engineering and Bimbo to Bristol University for Banking and Management. Bimbo went for another one-year professional course in the University of Birmingham only to land at the 'labour market' in Nigeria on coming back.

Leaving one's work for further studies, all in a bid to be better qualified, was at that time an unnecessary, 'expensive luxury' in Nigeria because on coming back, it may be difficult to get employed in the competitive labour market. Someone had to stay put on one's job, no matter how desirable of knowledge or of better expertise.

'Layo's Accommodating Spirit

Mrs Olufunlayo Owadayo, a well disciplined, caring and affectionate mother, shed a very humane influence on our children. She loved and cared for my aged mother in her last

days with us at Ibadan as her own mother. She took her out to places of interest like the amusement park, the zoo, etc., for recreation and sight-seeing. She even took her to the Bar-beach in Lagos.

The children too have taken after our caring attitude. Femi was called 'Pastor' when he was in Uniben, sharing his meager pocket money with poor fellow students. Ope also took her mother-in-law to the hospital for treatment while her husband was away. The mother-in-law was full of praises and gratitude to her.

God used my family to build some relationships. And it is by His grace that we were able to cultivate a circle of friends among our immediate and extended families, aside distant acquaintances. By this grace, many relations lived with us. Among them were nephews, nieces, cousins who included Grace Fayokunle (later wife of Bishop Agbaje of the African Church), Mercy Okolade (later Mrs Oniyide of the University of Lagos), Abel Olorunnironumi (my late brother Z.A. Owadayo's son), Janet Igbehinadun, Dada Ademuyiwa, Christopher Kora Ojomo—all these lived with us between 1964 and 1968.

Later when I returned from University, we had Janet Igbehinadun, Lucia Dada, Aina, Funke Dare (later wife of Mr. Ade Ayoko, Nigerian Ambassador in Geneva). Dorcas Omolapa and Odun Atta, also lived with us at Ibadan.

At Abeokuta we had Odunayo Atta, Peter, Timilehin Ojo, Ojo Towase, Gbenga Aluko, Alaba, Kehinde, Remi, etc, who lived with us. We made sure that we sent all these children to school, together with our own children.

The case of Gbenga Aluko was different. He came to spend the holiday with us but refused to go back. I insisted that he must go back to his parents. My wife as usual, said that I should leave him, an advice that I reluctantly agreed to. Sometime later,

his father, who was a school headmaster, died. Two or three years after, Janet Igbehinadun, his mother, also died. God gave us the grace to sponsor him through secondary school and to University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB) for the B.Sc. degree. Gbenga showed personality traits of being 'incurably' pious, prayerful, God-fearing and dependable.

Odunayo who had the longest stay, started from primary school when we were in Ikare (as Provost) and was sponsored to the State Polytechnic, Ilaro, for the National Diploma Certificate.

The last set of them to live with us included Alaba, who on the encouragement of Busayo and my wife, was sponsored on admission to the degree-awarding College of Education in Ijebu, Ogun State, for the B.Ed. (Econ.).

I will sincerely thank my wife, who demonstrated uncommon affection for all those who lived with us. Apart from accommodating them, she supported greatly in the education of most of these relatives who needed our love and support. To God be all the glory.

Layo is my God-chosen wife, and to her I am forever grateful for being so faithful to me and standing firm by me everywhere God sent me to work, and to our loving God-given children we are both grateful. Layo and I do not, and cannot claim to be good but God the Judge of all, knows we worked hard with all the talents He gave us.

And to Him, therefore, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:20f.)

Honours Roll

To the glory of God, some societies, associations, clubs and organisations showed appreciation of our contributions to peace, social development and other service to the community and so honoured us. The honours and awards we received by the grace of God, are listed below:

1. Life Patron of Ifira Progressive Union.
2. Prestigious Religious Award –"Harmony Award" –in recognition of contributions towards ensuring peace in our society by ASALATU "L" WAHABIYAT, on 27 May 2006.
3. Award as Boys' Brigade Patron by Ibadan Diocese -1996.
4. Award for Contribution towards the Development and the Growth of St. Peter's Cathedral -1996 Feast of Dedication
5. 'Outstanding Evangelism Award' by Light of Christ Society of St. Peter's Cathedral, Ake-Abeokuta in recognition of good leadership role associated with spiritual and structural development of Egba Diocese, 21st June, 2009.

6. 'Award of Excellence to A Grand Patron' by Fellowship of Christian Ministers – Egba Chapter, d. 15th February, 2009.
7. Honourary Award to Grand Patron and Grand Matron, Bishop and Mrs. M.O. Owadayo by Egba Prayer Band - 27th Jan. 2008.
8. Merit Award by MAPOLY Chapter of Ondo/Ekiti States Students' Association 2007/2008 Session.
9. Guest Speaker Award at Gateway Tourism Development Corporation – Thurs. 5th February, 2009.
10. Award of Excellence for Bishop and Mrs. M.O. Owadayo – Unprecedented Performance in Church, Laderin Abeokuta.
11. Award to Life Patron for support and efficient leadership by the BB, Egba Chapter.
12. Award For Immense Contributions to the Growth of the CCN, South Western Zone: 31st August 2010 (sgnd by Most Rev. M.K. Stephen).
13. CCN National Award to National Vice-Chairman (2004-2010) for useful services (signed by Most Rev. Emman. Josiah Udofia and Rev. Yusuf Ibrahim Wushishi).

Index

A

- ABEOCEC (Abeokuta Continuing Education Centre), 267
- Abeokuta, xviii, 182, 197, 203, 205, 223, 226–27, 229, 236, 243, 267, 271, 284, 294, 302
- Abeokuta Continuing Education Centre (ABEOCEC), 267
- Abeokuta Grammar School (AGS), 216, 218, 264
- Abraham Jegede Owadayo, 6
- Abuja, xv, 227–28, 253–54, 257, 285–87
- ACADEMIA, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145
- accommodation, 37, 39, 47–48, 78
- Adegbite, 277
- Ade Ojo, 277
- Adegbola, 80, 82, 88
- Adesunloye, 28, 30–31, 34
- Adetiloye, 80–81, 86, 218, 236, 244, 262, 279
- Ado Ariwajoye, 5
- administration, 81, 86, 131, 176, 227, 235
- administrator, 227–28, 236
- admission, 24, 27–29, 35, 70–71, 76–77, 81–82, 96, 104–5, 120, 139, 150, 178, 267, 320, 323
- Africa, 4, 203–4, 232, 258, 260
- African Church, 111, 215, 219, 322
- African Traditional Religion (ATR), 109, 126
- AGS (Abeokuta Grammar School), 216, 218, 264
- Akinde, 217–18, 238, 255, 257, 279, 283, 298
- Akinola, 188, 254
- Akinrele, 31, 34, 52
- Akintemi, xviii, 100–101, 115, 120, 183
- Akoko, 1–2, 13, 20, 32, 35, 141, 149, 178, 181, 321
- Akokoland, 1–3, 31, 61
- Akoko towns, 1–2
- Akure, 7, 35, 64, 76, 90, 94, 116–18, 125, 138, 158, 160, 166, 183, 188, 319
- allegations, 309–10
- altar, 231, 233, 309–10, 319
- America, 94, 134, 150, 154–55, 158–59, 161, 236, 274
- Anderson, Canon, 81, 160
- Andrian, 18, 22–23, 32
- Anglican Church, 96, 162, 189, 217, 260
- Anglican Church of Australia, 260
- Anglican Church of Nigeria, 117, 120
- Anglican Communion Office, 259–60
- answer, 18, 31, 69, 85–86, 144, 229
- appointment, 52, 55, 59, 112, 115–16, 131–32, 134, 255
- apprentice, 15, 65, 69–70

apprenticeship, 65, 67, 70, 96
 Apprenticeship Pays, 65, 67, 69, 71
 Archbishop, 52, 81, 87, 99, 163,
 173–74, 188, 197, 218, 236,
 244, 253, 266, 291, 298
 Archbishop Vining Training
 Centre, 319
 Arithmetic, 16, 23–24
 Arulefela, 123, 127–28, 208
 ATR (African Traditional
 Religion), 109, 126
 award, 50–51, 140, 191, 325–26
 Awobuluyi, 32, 44
 Awolalu, 110, 129, 138–39
 Ayanbuike, Isaac, 126, 129, 131,
 134
 Ayo Kehinde, 136, 143–45

B

Baruwa, 32, 37–38, 43
 believers, 75, 142, 167–68, 185,
 212–13, 220–21, 236, 253, 258,
 265, 270, 276
 Berkhout, Chief, 246
 Bible, 29–30, 62, 71, 110, 169–70,
 237–39, 258, 274, 303
 birth, 7–8, 102, 121, 205
 bishoprics, 196, 204
 boarding house, 33–34, 49–50
 Bodija, 127–28, 138
 boys, 21, 24–25, 37, 73, 78–79, 91,
 193, 242, 320, 325
 brother, 11–14, 19, 23, 27–34, 38–
 40, 43, 45, 48–50, 52, 89, 102,
 178–79, 181, 289, 292
 building, new Church, 271, 273
 burial, brother's, 179–80
 Busayo, 302, 321, 323

C

CAC (Christ Apostolic Church), 95
 care, 8, 11, 15, 29, 45–46, 150, 156,
 266, 280, 315
 Cathedral, 99, 148–49, 161–65,
 167–69, 171–73, 181–82, 218,
 226, 243, 254–55, 257, 269, 290
 Cathedral congregation, 172–73,
 310
 Cathedral members, 150, 161, 218
 Cathedral of St, 89, 135, 137, 148,
 217, 226, 236, 246, 253, 257,
 265, 274
 Cathedral Provost, 172, 238
 CCN (Christian Council of
 Nigeria), 151, 226, 326
 chapel, 52, 63, 110, 136, 175, 280
 charge, 32, 38, 93–94, 99, 132, 156,
 176, 268, 270, 272, 288, 297
 child, 4, 7–9, 83, 100, 125, 266
 children, 5–10, 13–14, 94–95, 128,
 130, 150–52, 169, 178, 180,
 208–11, 223, 225, 241–42, 311,
 320–22
 Christ, 59, 117, 128, 151, 178, 184,
 186, 205–6, 211, 240, 242, 245,
 292, 297, 307
 Christ, Jesus, xviii, 59, 71, 149, 151,
 185, 199, 202, 222, 261, 264,
 276, 292, 297, 315
 Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), 95
 Christian Council of Nigeria. *See*
 CCN
 Christianity, xviii, 6, 140, 142, 148,
 155, 159, 202–3, 211, 216, 220,
 222, 258, 291, 298
 christian life, 185, 187

- christians, 11, 149, 160, 168–70,
 232, 253, 258, 275–76, 279,
 292, 311
 Christmas, 119, 156–57, 162
 church, 15, 66, 93–94, 100–102,
 127–28, 154–55, 189–91, 218–
 19, 221–23, 230–31, 236–38,
 258–59, 270–74, 288–92, 294–
 96
 Church, Emmanuel, 161, 173, 294,
 298
 church
 entire, 63, 254
 new, 295–96
 parish, 116, 195
 young, 271, 294
 Church activities in Jos Diocese,
 137
 church administration, 172
 church denominations, 174, 215,
 240, 285
 church elders, 66, 305
 church faith, 154
 Church families for International
 students, 157
 church historian, 109–10, 126, 130
 Church History, 126, 129, 131, 134,
 154, 186
 church leaders, 115, 117, 119, 121,
 209, 253
 church members, 66, 91, 105, 231,
 256, 280, 299
 informed, 62
 church minister, 174
 church ministry, xviii, 71, 74, 86,
 116, 118, 125, 154, 305, 312
 supported, 219
 church music, 298
 Church of England, 260
 church of God, 190, 192, 218–19,
 231
 Church of God in Nigeria, 274
 Church of Nigeria, xvi, xviii, 64,
 117, 173, 188–89, 244, 253–55,
 259–60, 273, 279, 286, 288,
 292–93, 310
 Church of Nigeria authority, 150
 Church of Nigeria Theological and
 Doctrinal Committee
 (CNTDC), 188
 church planting, 217, 222, 265, 288
 Church Relationship Meeting, 274
 Church-school, 69
 church-school children, 69
 church-work, 75
 church workers, xix, 77, 172, 266–
 67
 first ordained, 66
 old, 78
 up-coming, 254
 church workers everyday, 297
 class, 15–24, 33, 35–37, 39–40, 42–
 44, 46–47, 49, 53, 55–56, 61,
 73, 78, 111, 121, 240–41
 classmates, 16–17, 33, 35–36, 43,
 48, 51, 61, 74, 78
 classrooms, 39, 42, 69, 99, 286–87
 class teacher, 16, 18, 22–24, 32
 clergy, xix, 79, 172, 182, 191, 222,
 225, 241, 250, 292, 301–7, 309,
 311, 314, 316
 clergymen, 111, 144, 165–66, 241,
 248, 304, 306
 clergy-wives, 305
 CNTDC (Church of Nigeria
 Theological and Doctrinal
 Committee), 188

Cocoa Research Institute of
Nigeria (CRIN), 184
college, 27, 29, 31–34, 36–37, 46, 50,
52–54, 61, 63–64, 76–78, 80–
83, 86–88, 90, 108, 173–77
college bursar, 39, 42
comfort, 15, 29, 41, 97, 275, 307
Commission, 154, 259, 261–62
Communion, 260–62, 289
completion, 15, 46, 50, 59, 79, 168,
177, 250, 252–53, 255–56, 270,
272–73, 283, 286, 294
condition, 5–6, 47, 78, 179, 188
Conscience, 221, 311
contractor, 148, 251–52
Cor, 35, 84–85, 97–98, 170, 191,
207, 211–12, 241, 249, 261,
269, 280, 292, 307, 315
corruption, 232, 237
cost, 14, 47, 50, 59, 97, 138–39, 144,
247, 251–52, 267, 272, 276,
283–84, 298, 301
couple, 4, 20, 24, 38–39, 75, 95, 102,
256
courage, 2, 40, 47, 151, 166, 185,
226, 275, 312, 314
covenant, 58, 261, 263
cramp, 84, 99, 306–7
CRIN (Cocoa Research Institute of
Nigeria), 184

D

daughter-churches, 161, 294
daughters, xix, 4–5, 7–10, 15, 100,
116, 165, 195, 210, 248, 257,
285, 288

days, 7, 10, 16, 19, 38–41, 45, 53–
56, 58, 98–99, 101–2, 108, 110,
130, 138–39, 178–81
Dean, xv, 153–54, 158, 171, 173–77,
179, 181, 183, 185–87, 189,
191, 193, 304, 310
death, 29, 40, 85, 97, 99, 112, 166,
178–79, 181, 184–85, 202, 209–
11, 248, 251, 311–12
debtors, 39, 42
decision, 58, 85, 271, 293
decree, 162, 210
dedication, 60, 94, 144, 197, 272,
294, 296, 303, 325
degree, higher, 123–25, 127, 129,
153, 191
Delano, 222, 252, 269–71
denominations, 153, 173–76, 239
department, 52, 107, 109–10, 123–
26, 129, 138–39
Department of Religious Studies,
52, 109, 130–31, 135, 137, 140
difficulties, 16, 33, 37–38, 67, 82–
84, 97, 147, 275, 306, 309
Diocesan Bishop, xvi, 93–95, 99,
105, 115, 123, 135, 148, 165–
66, 171, 211, 228, 269, 276
first, 52, 144
Diocesan Bishop of Akoko, 195,
246
diocesan church, 190
Diocesan Magazine, 298
diocesan seminaries, 189
Diocesan Silver Jubilee
Celebration, 283, 285, 287,
289, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299
Diocesan Synod, 214, 217–18, 221,
244, 248, 263–64, 269, 299, 312
first, 132, 221

Diocese, 115–16, 142, 144–45, 159,
 213–14, 221–25, 238–40, 250,
 252–53, 256, 263–64, 267–72,
 285–89, 294–98, 302
 Disney World, 156–57
 disposal, 124, 272, 284, 287, 298
 division, 67, 171, 219
 divorce, 75, 97
 doctors, 143, 178, 229, 291, 301–3
 dreams, 10, 28, 36, 48–49, 56, 59–
 60, 62, 67–68, 90, 93, 193, 224,
 230, 286, 295
 drive, 156, 164, 178, 238, 240, 270–
 71
 duty, 66, 112, 137, 142, 163, 176,
 197, 229, 267, 280, 301, 303,
 305

E

earth, 41, 99, 185, 202, 268–69
 ECWA (Evangelical Church of
 West Africa), 189
 education, 13–14, 18–20, 23, 25, 36,
 39, 47, 50, 73–74, 186, 203,
 205, 222–24, 230–32, 323
 primary, 13, 15, 17–19, 21, 23, 25
 secondary, 27–29, 31, 33, 35, 37,
 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53,
 55, 57
 theological, 78, 120, 186, 188,
 191, 297
 Egba, xvi, 197, 199, 202–3, 205,
 214–16, 218–19, 243–44, 267,
 293, 304, 311, 315
 Egba Diocese, xvi, xix, 213–14, 223,
 238, 240, 242–43, 247, 250,

253–54, 293, 296, 301–2, 310,
 313
 Egbaland, 197–98, 202, 205, 216–
 17, 219–20, 226, 235, 240, 242,
 268, 271, 273–74, 304, 308–10,
 314
 Egbuche, 20–21
 election, 136, 149, 177–78, 193, 195,
 197, 199, 238, 254
 Elizabeth, 50, 118
 employment, 38, 55, 60
 energy, 2, 164, 268, 270–72, 284
 England, 81, 93, 117, 159, 260–62
 enrich church life, 78
 Episcopacy, 67, 198, 201, 226, 242,
 296
 Episcopal Church, 259–60
 establishment, 115, 236–37, 292
 Evangelical Church of West Africa
 (ECWA), 189
 exam hall, 61, 83
 examination, 23, 51, 53, 60–61, 73,
 82, 112
 exams, 24, 53–56, 59–62, 86, 104,
 115
 experience, xix, 8, 10, 16–17, 37–38,
 41, 48, 62, 65, 82–83, 196, 209–
 10, 227, 245, 247
 experiment, 82, 85, 87–88
 eyes, 16–17, 41, 47, 61, 216

F

Fagboyegun, Canon, 181–83
 faith, 67, 95–98, 167–68, 170, 183–
 86, 203, 205, 211–12, 214–16,
 239–40, 242, 258, 276–77, 291–
 92, 295–96

christian, 203, 216, 289, 291
 church's, 70
 heroes of, 203, 212, 258, 292
 living, 167, 295
 family, 4, 6, 8–9, 11, 28–29, 95,
 100–101, 125, 127–28, 130–31,
 145, 147, 173, 175, 248
 entire, 102, 130
 Family God, 319, 321, 323
 farm, 4, 12, 14, 28–29, 101–2
 farmwork, 8, 11, 29, 49, 182
 father, 5–6, 8–10, 14–15, 94–96, 99,
 101–2, 160, 167, 169, 180, 204,
 206, 248, 266–67, 277
 late, 10, 94, 164, 266, 279
 father's house, 9–10
 fear, 37, 40–41, 43, 46, 48, 50, 53,
 55, 96–97, 101–2, 124, 191–92,
 210, 255, 257
 fear of God, 197, 207, 210, 225, 231,
 236, 270, 316
 fees, 33–35, 38–41, 43–45, 47–50,
 320
 fellow church members, 149
 Femi, 147, 255, 320, 322
 foodstuffs, 38, 45, 48
 foundation, 127, 249, 256, 269,
 272–73, 283, 295
 Fourth Synod of Ondo Diocese,
 120, 289
 Friday, 40, 63, 155–57, 228, 246,
 248–49, 251, 266, 273
 friend's house, 138–39

G

GCE, 44, 81–82, 84, 99
 generations, 18, 24, 183, 185, 196,
 201, 204–5, 210–11, 213, 254,
 258, 292, 297, 317, 323
 gifts, 96, 173, 181, 190, 211, 216,
 264, 268, 275, 280
 girls, 22, 25, 73, 91, 242, 320
 God, 45–49, 67–71, 83–91, 96–98,
 139–45, 169–75, 181–86, 192–
 99, 204–13, 235–38, 247–49,
 261–81, 284–89, 302–9, 311–17
 God-fearing, 11, 67, 185, 213, 217–
 18, 241, 244, 278, 323
 gold, 204, 211, 276, 280
 Goodpasture, Ken, 153–55
 government, 32, 57, 116, 175, 186,
 226–30, 232
 grace, 61, 97–98, 104, 190, 192,
 198–99, 203, 206, 212–13, 248–
 49, 267–69, 280, 302, 304, 322–
 23
 grace of God, xix, 56, 96, 212, 247,
 249, 269, 291, 306–7, 325
 gratitude, 57–58, 61, 139, 142, 209,
 271, 279, 322
 groups, 4, 237, 240, 242, 244, 258

H

hall, 89, 108, 110–11, 115, 217, 283,
 285–86, 320
 hand, 13, 16, 58, 60, 82, 96, 99, 129,
 134, 148, 181, 195, 232, 306
 Hawaii Island, 244–45, 247
 Head of Department, 109, 123,
 129, 138

headquarters, 3–4
 health, good, 301–2
 heat, 54, 56, 78, 227
 Higher School Certificate (HSC),
 51, 78, 218
 history, xvii, xix, 2, 53, 152, 154,
 201, 205, 208, 212, 216, 258,
 266, 293, 297
 Holy Spirit, 150, 185, 211–12, 221,
 238, 248, 261, 294–95
 Holy Trinity Church, 215, 223, 236,
 248, 288
 home, 31, 33–34, 38, 40, 43, 62,
 100–101, 159–60, 162, 178–79,
 210, 214, 229–30, 255, 257
 home church, 31, 58, 65, 195, 256,
 271, 278
 hospital, 128, 178, 229–30, 265,
 302–4, 322
 host, 156–57, 197, 263, 266–67, 269,
 271, 288
 house, 6, 15, 27, 45, 47–48, 78, 145,
 149, 161, 168, 230, 252, 255,
 271, 276
 houseboy, 37–38, 43–45
 Howarth, Ronald, 46, 52, 54
 HSC (Higher School Certificate),
 51, 78, 218
 human life, 184, 316
 hurt, 14, 42, 308, 310
 husband, 5, 50, 89, 116, 118, 184,
 256, 289, 305, 320–22

I

IATDC (Inter-Anglican
 Theological and Doctrinal
 Commission), 259–60

Ibadan, 35–36, 74, 76–77, 82–83,
 105, 107, 119–20, 125–30, 132–
 33, 158, 171, 178–79, 184, 248,
 320–22
 Ibadan Grammar School, 80, 218
 Ibadan Polytechnic, 127–28, 131
 Idogun, 3, 5, 10–11, 13, 15, 21–23,
 29, 39, 102
 Ifira, 1, 3–5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 18, 23–24,
 30–31, 38, 40, 45, 65–66, 90–
 91, 101–2
 history of, 3–4, 91
 Ifira-Akoko, xvii, 1, 4, 89, 120, 179,
 181
 Ifira-Ipesi, 15, 20, 23, 96
 Igbehinadun, Janet, 322–23
 Ikare, 24, 27–28, 30–32, 40, 43, 48,
 61, 90, 138–39, 143, 148, 163–
 64, 168–69, 320, 323
 Ikare-Akoko, xviii, 10, 56, 147–48,
 173
 Ikereku Holy Trinity Church, 218,
 288
 Ile-Oluji, 94–95, 99, 319
 Ilepá, 148, 161–63, 173
 Immanuel College, 76–77, 87, 96,
 128, 177, 196, 311
 Immanuel College of Theology,
 xv, 66, 70, 76–77, 86, 119, 125,
 58, 160, 171, 173, 184, 218, 310
 Immanuel College of Theology
 and Diocesan Bishop, 154
 indigene, 22, 24, 94, 141, 165, 228
 institutions, 55, 80, 87, 107–8, 116,
 153–54, 157, 188, 191, 224, 252
 Inter-Anglican Theological and
 Doctrinal Commission. *See*
 IATDC

international students, 153–54,
156–57

interview, 24, 55, 76, 156, 279

invitation, xv, 21, 65, 123, 125,
138–39, 156, 158, 219, 228,
247, 274, 284

Ipesi, 3, 7, 10, 15, 18, 31, 48, 64, 95

Ishua, 3–4, 7, 20–21, 30–31

J

Jegede, 19–20

Jesus, 68, 85, 98, 143, 150, 185, 201,
209, 211–12, 243, 249, 276,
312, 314–16

Joel, 35–36, 67, 98

Jos, 79, 130–35, 137, 141–42, 145,
147–48, 165, 307, 320–21

Jos Diocese, 135, 137, 144–45

journey, xviii, 10, 40–41, 96, 101,
125, 181, 244, 247, 272, 275,
314

Justice Kolawole, 263–64

K

King's College, 23, 27–28, 34–35,
80

knowledge, 56, 70, 130, 142, 153–
55, 186, 223, 231, 235, 240,
266, 269, 321

Kolade, 58, 62, 76, 96, 164, 290

L

Ladipo Jegede, 18–19

Lagos, 23–25, 28, 31, 34, 66, 74,
213–15, 235–36, 244, 255–57,
284, 286, 302, 320, 322

Lambeth Conference, 250–51, 261,
289

lawyers, 24, 164, 175, 231–32, 309–
10

learnt, 27, 38, 48, 54, 71, 75, 117,
131, 138, 150, 223, 249, 286,
290

lecturers, 42, 63, 79–80, 109, 137,
141, 176, 186, 190, 218

lectures, 107, 109, 111, 190, 196

Legal Year Service, 231, 309

letter, 34, 59, 74, 79, 104, 116, 141–
42, 154, 193, 261, 310–11

licence, 154, 156

life, 52–53, 55–56, 58, 83–85, 94–98,
149–50, 166–67, 169–70, 183–
85, 207–10, 236–37, 245–46,
269–70, 272–76, 305–6

life ambition, 82, 119, 303

life history, 38, 130, 153

life journey, xvii, 68, 205, 209

lifeless, 7, 11

life ministry, 186, 244

life pilgrimage, 147, 210

life stories, 168, 212

location, 1, 88–90

Lokoja, 258, 290–92

London, 80, 87–88, 152–53, 159,
269, 321

Lord, xvi, 41, 57–58, 98, 134, 136,
151, 153, 167, 180, 208–10,
232–33, 266–69, 292, 294

loss, 7, 9, 112, 178–79, 311

loving church members, 145

lunch, 38, 45, 141, 156, 160

M

- Majekodunmi, 223, 301–2, 304
 Malaysia, 244, 247, 260–61
 Mama, 117, 169–70, 246
 Marian, 11, 22
 marriage, 74–75, 96, 262
 marry, 4–6, 75
 masters, 38, 44–46, 71, 126, 129, 292
 mates, 20, 36, 42, 51, 56, 60, 63, 76, 100
 Medical Welfare, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 311, 314, 316
 meeting, 23, 131, 134, 168, 171, 174, 223, 231, 235, 260, 274, 303, 320
 members, 93–94, 100–103, 148–50, 164, 167–68, 171–76, 217–18, 222, 236, 238–39, 241–44, 248–49, 271–72, 294–95, 311
 distant, 100, 241, 255, 271, 285, 306
 executive, 111
 membership, recruiting church, 15
 mentor, 23, 30, 33, 70, 123, 128, 197, 272–73
 Methodist, 77, 83, 87, 174–75, 196
 Methodist and Anglican Churches in Nigeria, 81
 Methodist Churches, 125
 Methodist Church Nigeria, 109
 Methodist Church Nigeria Conference, 176
 Michael Adedotun Gbedebo, 216–18
 military administrator, 226–27
 mind, 31, 34, 50–51, 57, 68, 70, 74, 76, 103–4, 138–40, 151–52, 192–93, 196, 310, 312
 Ministerial Ambition, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91
 ministers, 32, 66, 75, 159, 231, 241, 311, 315
 would-be, 70
 ministers of God, 219, 292, 315
 ministry, xviii–xix, 84–86, 97, 118–19, 127–28, 161, 201–5, 207–9, 211–13, 217, 219, 240–42, 267–68, 296–97, 308–10
 episcopal, 213, 235, 274, 296, 312
 life-long, 71
 ordained, 63, 239, 305
 tent-making, 176, 184
 various, 55, 242
 ministry of giving, 268, 271
 Ministry of Health, 119, 167
 Ministry of Service, 263–64
 minutes, 88, 139–40, 157–58, 303
 miracles, 8, 10, 43, 57, 85–86, 137, 143–44, 247, 252, 284, 302–3
 mission, 97, 116, 155, 159, 240, 271, 289–90
 missionaries, xviii, 116, 160, 216, 218, 288, 294
 Missionary Diocese of Ifo, 293
 missionary, 78, 289–90
 Monday, 40, 42, 63, 132, 134, 138, 151, 156, 174, 244, 251, 253, 274, 293, 295
 money, 28, 32, 38–39, 48, 50, 55, 69, 75, 169, 177, 187, 194, 256, 264, 269
 donated, 296–97, 302

mother, 2, 4–11, 13–15, 27–30, 32,
50, 62, 94–95, 101–2, 113, 117–
18, 163, 179–81, 266, 322–23
mother-church, 226
mother-in-law, 322

N

naira, hundred thousand, 250–51,
296, 298
name, xix, 2, 4, 6, 8–9, 29, 33, 48,
50, 57, 59, 98, 100, 246–47, 314
naming ceremony, 100–101, 121
New Primate, 253, 259
news, 3, 18, 21, 89, 102, 152, 184,
194, 251, 272, 320
niece, 15–17, 19–22, 29, 48, 307, 322
Nigeria, xviii, 3, 64, 117–18, 156,
159–60, 173–74, 226–27, 246–
47, 253–55, 258–60, 279, 286–
89, 291–93, 320–21
history of, 178, 278
Nigeria-American Church
Relationship, 273
Nigerian, 110, 117, 153
Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC),
228
NLC (Nigerian Labour Congress),
228
nomination, 135–36

O

Oba-Akoko, 3, 62, 65–67, 70, 76, 96
Oba Oyebade Lipede Evangelistic
Mission (OOLEM), 217

occasion, 89, 91, 110, 144, 164–65,
167, 173, 176, 248–49, 254–55,
265, 267, 285, 287–88, 308
Odigbo, 99–102, 104–5, 319
office, 13, 39, 59, 80, 112, 129, 132,
139, 143, 150, 161, 172–74,
178, 187, 226
OGD (Otunba Gbenga Daniel),
220, 226, 229–30, 285
Ogedengbe, 2, 5, 44, 46
Ogunseinde, 240, 242, 301
Ogun State, 197–98, 219, 224, 226–
28, 246, 253, 285, 323
Ogun-State, 227–28, 230–31
Ogun State Military
Administrator, 197, 246, 308
Ojiako, 32, 43–44
Okusanya, xviii, 76, 89–90, 94, 100,
105, 115, 125, 289, 292
Oladetohun, 289–90
Olajide, 83, 86, 175, 242, 246
Olashore, Oba, 236–37
Oloniyo, 62, 66, 69, 76, 91, 104, 208
Olufisoye, provost, 99
Olupona, Canon, 93–94
Omogbeja, 22, 24–25, 74
Omoyajowo, 81, 89, 110, 126, 129
Ondo, xviii, 31, 35, 42, 46, 64, 78,
89–90, 95, 101, 115, 118, 140,
179, 202
Ondo and Ileoluji church
members, 95
OOLEM (Oba Oyebade Lipede
Evangelistic Mission), 217
ordinands, 96, 188, 190–91, 305
ordination, 82, 89–90, 120, 176,
239, 251, 304
OSMAS, 224–25, 298, 302
Osoba, 177, 179, 271–72

Otunba Gbenga Daniel. *See* OGD
 Owadayo, xv–xvi, 6, 42, 89, 205,
 224, 242, 248, 265, 326
 owners, 230–31, 306
 Oyebade Lipede, 214, 216, 249, 283
 Oyeleye, 78, 89, 93, 290
 Oyewole Twins, 266–67

P

parents, 4–6, 8, 13–14, 20–22, 24,
 28, 34, 52, 75, 97, 100, 137,
 156, 210, 224
 pass, 43, 47, 56–57, 85–86, 97, 138,
 156, 169, 204, 275
 patient, 148, 229, 303
 Paul, 71, 84–85, 206–7, 212, 249,
 269, 280
 peace, 143, 145, 225, 263, 275, 310,
 315, 325
 plan, 27, 34–35, 68–69, 82, 87, 97,
 103–4, 134, 139, 143, 148, 164,
 173, 177, 195
 plant, 288, 294
 postgraduate studies, 123–24, 126,
 130, 320–21
 prayers, 18, 41, 52, 63, 83, 85, 102,
 124, 164, 179, 204, 213, 225,
 227–28, 279
 predecessors, 105, 125, 214, 217,
 269–70
 Preferred Cathedral Provost, 141,
 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157,
 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169
 preparation, 15, 28, 45–46, 71, 73,
 91, 111, 151, 194, 246, 250–51
 Presbyterian School of Education.
See PSE

primary school life, 22
 Primate of Church of Nigeria, 259
 principles, 44, 158, 186–87
 programme, 27, 82, 159, 176–77,
 241, 245, 296–97
 project, 127, 150, 177, 218, 250–53,
 255–57, 283–87, 313
 promotion, 16–17, 43, 49, 196, 310
 protest, 111–12, 149, 162
 Provost appointed, 141–42, 195,
 290
 provost's house, 142, 148, 150, 164,
 166
 Psalms, 41, 57, 98, 130, 233, 247,
 255, 314
 PSE (Presbyterian School of
 Education), 153–54
 pupils, 13, 16–17, 19, 21, 23–24, 40,
 45, 48, 225, 267

R

release, 4–5, 34, 124, 148, 231
 Religious Studies, 52, 107, 109,
 124–25, 130–31, 135, 137, 140–
 41, 298
 Relinquishment, 163, 293
 research work, 129, 133–34, 136
 residence, 59, 108, 182
 resumption, 27, 30, 34, 48, 50
 retirement, 63, 115, 117, 207, 216–
 17, 219, 224, 231–32, 269–73,
 284, 286, 290–91, 295–96, 309,
 311
 revival services, 104, 167
 Richmond, 155–56, 186
 risks, xviii, 8, 47–48, 242
 Rufus Giwa, 195

S

- Saints' Church, 161, 173, 184
- Samuel Ajayi Crowther, xviii, 159, 202–5
- Samuel Segun Obasoro, 30, 76
- Saturday, 90–91, 94, 99, 132, 137, 156, 243–44, 246, 248, 251, 254, 265, 274, 308
- Saviour's Church, 99–100, 104, 128, 257, 319
- scholar, world-class Church historian, 134
- scholarships, 50–51, 150–51, 174, 195, 294, 296
- school, 13–24, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36–37, 39, 49–50, 56, 116, 118, 147–49, 223–25, 230–31, 238–39
- entire, 19
- model, 224, 287, 298, 302
- primary, 15, 22–24, 35, 37, 73–74, 224, 323
- secondary, 27–28, 31, 43, 203, 224, 323
- school fees, 14, 28, 50–51
- school hours, 24–25, 40, 45
- schooling, 14, 16, 321
- Secretary, 79, 136, 188, 223, 259–60, 301
- Segun Osoba, Chief, 226, 228, 243, 242–53
- seminary, 74, 90, 100, 153, 175, 186, 188, 190, 203, 239, 273, 304–5
- Senior Cambridge Exam, 53, 55, 57, 82
- services, 89, 121, 127–28, 162–63, 165–66, 169, 196–97, 217–18, 226–27, 231–32, 249, 263–65, 271–73, 276–78, 302–3
- installation, 165
- marriage, 128, 246, 248
- settlement, 38, 119
- shame, 25, 184, 207, 315
- shillings, 23–24, 34, 38, 49–50
- Shonekan, 214, 250
- Shoniki, Chief, 295
- Soboyejo, 235–36
- social life, 80, 108
- son, 5–6, 9, 11, 14, 30, 165, 167–68, 184, 204, 206, 210, 248, 270, 276–77, 288–89
- Souls' Church, 127–28, 271, 312
- sound, 101, 120, 138, 174, 186, 188, 191
- Sovereign Lord, 57
- spiritual life, 66, 128
- staff, 35, 41, 52, 60, 80–82, 87, 118–21, 153, 174, 176, 197, 224–25, 229, 257, 285
- academic, 85, 87–88, 176
- staff members, administrative, 111, 260
- St. Alban's Diocese, 158, 161
- St. Andrew's Church, 219, 243, 264
- start, xv, 61, 70, 73, 150, 162, 223–24, 238, 249, 283–84, 286, 316
- station, xviii, 98, 104–5, 196, 305–6
- Std Five, 19, 21, 24, 73
- Std Five Class, 22–23
- St. John's Anglican Church, 15, 95
- St. John's Church, 18, 76, 267, 278
- St Luke's Church, 93, 104
- St. Luke's Church, 135, 137
- St. Paul, 68, 84, 97–98, 142, 151, 167, 170, 185, 206, 215, 225, 241, 243, 262, 276
- St. Paul's Church, 137, 295
- St Paul's School, 21–23

St. Peter's Anglican Church, 15, 96
 St. Peter's Cathedral, 251, 325
 St Peter's Church, 7, 120, 179
 St. Peter's Church, 62, 65–66, 90,
 94, 99, 181, 294–95, 319
 students, 32–34, 44–45, 47, 50–54,
 60–61, 63–64, 78–81, 86–89,
 109, 111–13, 118–21, 153–54,
 176, 196–97, 223–25
 final year, 33, 51, 53–54, 88, 154
 generation of, 86
 outgoing, 60–61
 postgraduate, 108, 126
 Students' Assembly, 79
 Students' Union, 111
 subjects, 38, 53, 220–21, 224, 289
 success, 43, 48–49, 74, 103–4, 169,
 175, 177
 success of our ministry, 199, 242
 Sunday Bible School, 241
 Sunday church services, 11
 Sunday services, 29, 40, 166, 168
 supervision, 102, 129, 131, 133, 252
 supervisor, 129–35
 synod, 136–37, 176, 218, 221–23,
 225, 227–29, 231, 233, 249,
 263–69, 271, 287–88, 290, 294,
 296
 synod members, 222, 288
 synod themes, 218, 221, 238, 244,
 258, 263, 271, 288

T

Tasie, 130–34, 140
 teachers, xv, xix, 14, 16, 18–20, 22,
 24, 27, 35, 74, 93, 118, 186,
 191, 305

 church school, 77
 teaching appointment, 34, 116, 118
 team ministry, 174–76, 196, 304
 team ministry members, 178, 186
 tenure, 63, 167, 193, 213–14, 226,
 228, 272
 thanksgiving service, 90–91, 120,
 222, 254, 265
 themes, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229,
 231, 233, 238, 248–49, 264,
 266, 268, 271, 288, 294
 Theological College, 188
 Theological Institution, 77, 187–89
 Theology, xv, 188, 191, 197, 307
 throne, 217–19, 236
 towns, 1, 3, 5, 8, 15, 62, 91, 103, 149
 traditional rulers, 4, 197, 209, 214–
 16, 218–20, 225, 243, 246, 274
 training, 77, 115, 117–21, 177, 187,
 189–92, 244–45, 279, 292, 297,
 304, 320
 transfer, 66, 99–100, 141, 148, 172,
 302, 305
 Tuesday, 39, 132–34, 152, 197, 253,
 255, 293

U

UMC (United Missionary
 College), 80
 UNAAB (University of
 Agriculture, Abeokuta), 323
 undergraduate days, 107, 109, 111,
 113, 196
 Union Theological Seminary. *See*
 UTS
 United Missionary College
 (UMC), 80

United School, 15, 20, 23
 United States of America. *See* USA
 universities, 125, 320
 University, 51, 53, 78, 81–82, 87,
 107, 109–10, 112–13, 118, 120,
 123–26, 129, 136, 139, 141
 University invitation, 123
 University of Agriculture,
 Abeokuta (UNAAB), 323
 University of Ibadan, 52, 77, 82,
 86, 104, 107–8, 113, 128, 130,
 135, 140, 174, 197, 320
 UNIVERSITY of IBADAN, 109,
 111, 113
 University of Ife, 104, 107
 University of Jos, xv, 128, 131, 135,
 137, 307
 University of Nigeria, 109, 140
 university scholarship, 125, 127,
 129
 USA (United States of America),
 133, 150, 153–54, 157, 159,
 247, 260–61, 273, 317
 UTS (Union Theological
 Seminary), 153–55, 186

V

Various Prongs, 237, 239, 241, 243,
 245, 247, 249, 251, 253, 255,
 257, 259, 261, 263, 265
 Ven, 76, 79, 119, 123, 127–29, 139–
 40, 174–75, 239, 242, 267, 272,
 284, 290, 295, 298
 Vicar, 31, 69–70, 76, 91, 99, 104,
 127, 148, 154

vicarages, 75, 78, 94, 104, 256, 271,
 278, 280, 296
 Victoria, 15, 19, 21–22, 197
 Victoria Olayemi Ojomo, 15, 17,
 19–20
 Victory College, xviii, 24, 27–28,
 30–31, 33, 35, 37, 43, 47, 56,
 63, 66, 83, 88, 90
 villages, xvii, 1–2, 5, 8, 35, 40, 143,
 149, 291
 Vining Centre, 116–18, 120, 123,
 160
 vision, 67–68, 81, 120, 151, 180,
 193, 214, 240, 284, 286

W

water project, pure, 286–87
 Watford Deanery, 159–61
 WCC (World Council of
 Churches), 150–51
 wealth, 182, 226, 277, 280–81
 welcome, 91, 156, 213, 216, 312
 Western State, 126–27, 129
 wife, 49–50, 95–96, 101–2, 117–18,
 125, 127–28, 145, 150, 172–75,
 178–79, 197–98, 307, 310–13,
 319–20, 322–23
 wives, 6, 9, 11, 14, 97, 116–19, 196,
 301, 304, 306, 311–12
 women, 8, 75, 90–91, 117, 164, 175,
 208, 212, 238, 240–42, 258,
 287, 290, 304, 312
 work, xviii–xix, 57–58, 74–75, 115–
 16, 118, 142, 145, 174–75, 195–
 96, 202–4, 249, 251–53, 284,
 304, 306–7
 workers, 63, 66–67, 93, 115–16,
 118, 135, 148, 172, 231, 256,
 284, 297, 301, 303, 305

church mission, 117
judiciary, 231–32
world, 155–56, 158, 161, 182–83,
186–87, 190–92, 207, 209–10,
225, 227, 245, 247, 258, 275,
314–15
World Council of Churches
(WCC), 150–51
worship, 30, 110, 136–37, 155, 157,
218, 226, 271, 297
writer, 54, 57, 84–85, 198, 201, 276,
312

Y

Young Women Christian
Association (YWCA), 159
YWCA (Young Women Christian
Association), 159

Z

zeal, 284, 288, 294–95

The writing of his Memoirs is timely, particularly at this time when we need inspiration from those whose lives speak volume in the areas of spirituality, impeccability, accountability and forthrightness. I personally look forward to reading this book. I cannot wait a minute to have my own copy, not just for keeps, but for reading and digestion. I commend this book to this generation and generations yet unborn.

Most Revd. Dr. E. Adebola Ademowo OON

Diocesan Bishop of Lagos and Dean Emeritus,
Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

Bishop Owadayo and I became bishops on the same day. He made invaluable contributions to the life of the Church, especially in the area of ministry and training. He headed several committees set up by the church and assisted the leadership of the Church on several issues. Egba Diocese, from where he retired a few years ago, will forever cherish a lofty memory of his many contributions to the development of the Diocese. Bishop Owadayo was appointed by the Primate to succeed me as the chairman of the Anglican African Church Commission. This is the commission that promotes areas of understanding between the two sister-churches that separated in the early 20th century.

Bishop Remi Owadayo remains focused, articulate and relevant as a church Historian. I am aware that writing and publishing at this age is not an easy task. But the efforts made to add to our knowledge of the history of the Church in Nigeria is greatly appreciated.

I wish him and his family joy, happiness and peace in his retirement.

Rt. Revd. Prof. Akin Omoyajowo

Former Bishop of Ijebu Diocese and Ikale-Ilaje Diocese
and the first Professor of Religious Studies, University of Ife.



Safari Books Ltd
Ibadan, Nigeria

ISBN 978-978-8431-43-5



9 789788 431435



Chief Abraham Jegede Ogundana Owadayo



Mama Sarah Owadayo with brother Zachariah Ademola Owadayo



Young Oluremi Matthew Owadayo and Eunice on their wedding day, with Janet (chief bride's maid) and Dayo Bowaje (bestman). Little girl is Funke Dare



**From Left: Marian, Juliet (Chief brides maid) and Funke Dare (little girl)
with Mrs. Grace Eunice Owadayo, 31-8-65**



At the naming ceremony of Olufemi Olujisanmi, Jan. 28, 1966



Young admirers at our wedding, 31-8-65



**Confirmation at St. Peters, Ile-Oluji. Sitting
from left: Provost I.B.O. Akintemi, Bishop I.O.S. Okusanya and Canon M.A. Olupona**



As Dean, with staff and Tent-making students. I.C.T, Ibadan



**Sitting: L-R, Remi Owadayo, Iya and Layo
Standing L-R: Sola, Busayo, Dorcas, Bimbo, Odun, Ope and Femi**



With primary six pupils and two teacher-colleagues, Animasaun A.O.(Left) and Pelemo C.O. (Right), at St. Peter's, Oba-Akoko, 1960



Young Mrs. Eunice Oluwafunmilayo Owadayo



As Dean, Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, after election as Bishop, 1995



With Ipiran-Ifira Council of Elders, 1995



With some UTS and PSE students, 1986



**Being assisted by Carol Saunders while presenting Nigeria at
International Student's Day**



Bishop Oluremi and Eunice Owadayo (2nd and 3rd left), with some Lambeth delegates



Post-retirement visit to Mary Summer, Headquarters House, London



At DC at Nairobi, Kenya, 2006



With Archbishop of Australia, as Resource Persons at Bishops' Retreat, Jan. 2014



Bishop Owadayo (far left), at the matriculation of students (ICT) by U.I. Registrar



**With guests from Portsmouth Diocese, at the 4th Anniversary consecration
thanksgiving service**



Being congratulated by Gov. Adekunle Ajasin (now late) of Ondo-State on my installation as Provost of the Cathedral, 1983



L-R: Lili William from Switzerland, Owadayo and Brisom, UTS, Va.



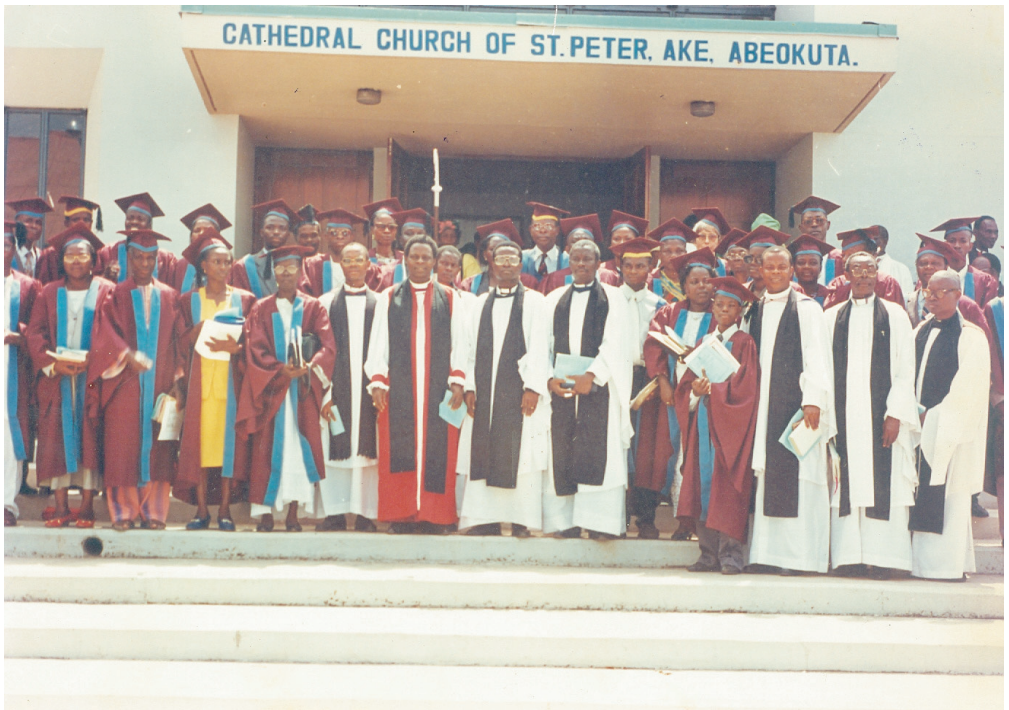
After Consecration, Feb. 5th, 1995



Owadayo, (standing first from left), at Episcopal Training, Bodija Bishopscourt, Ibadan. Oct. 5th - 25th, 1996.



With Gov. Olusegun Osoba, Oba Oyeade Lipede, Oba Tella, and other well-wishers after 60th birthday service



At the Diocesan Bible School Graduation Ceremony



With members of the steering committee and the first set of 15 students and Staff of Omolaja Sodipe Memorial Anglican School (OSMAS), Oct., 1995



At the opening service for the training of Bishops



From left: Bishops I. Ngede of Otukpo (left), J.O.K Olowokure, Matthew Owadayo and Peter Adebiyi at 60th birthday of Bishop Owadayo



New legal year service, Monday 13th September, 1999



Consecration at Our Saviour's Cathedral, Ijebu-Ode, Feb. 5, 1995



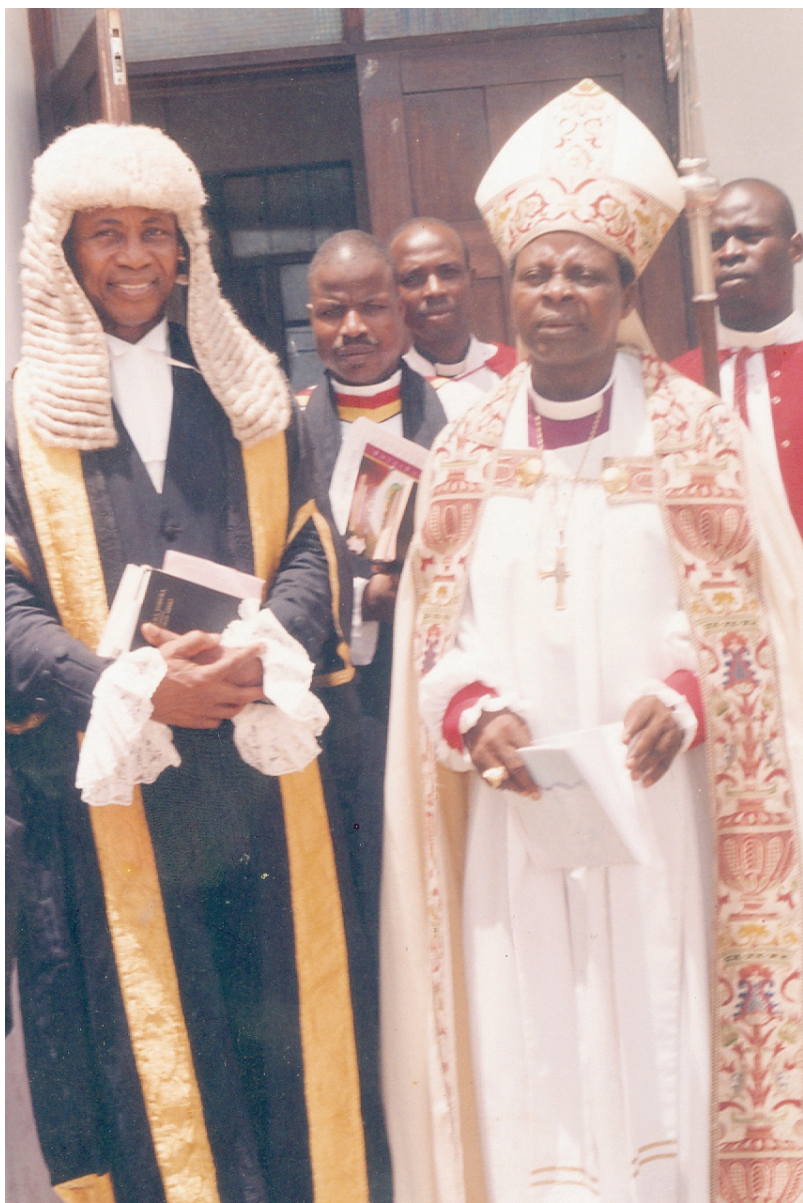
L.R: Ven. Engr. Arawole, Tunji Odegbami, Mrs. Toyin Odegbami and Chief E. Otesile with Bishop and Mrs. Owadayo



Dancing to the altar with well-wishers at 60th birthday thanksgiving service



With deputy Chancellor of Egba Diocese, Hon. Justice Lokulo-Sodipe



With Chief Akin Delano, SAN



With Hon. Justice I. Delano



Hugged by Gov. Segun Osoba at 60th birthday Celebration



Welcoming the Primate, Most Rev. Peter J. Akinola, to a thanksgiving service.



With Abp. Segun Okubadejo



**In a warm handshake with Hon. Justice J.A.O. Sofolahan at
St. Paul's Church, Igbore**



Matthew & Eunice Owadayo with Ruth Martin (Second left) and her friends at Stratford.



As self-preferred Canon, with Bishop S.C.N. Ebo of Jos Diocese, 1981



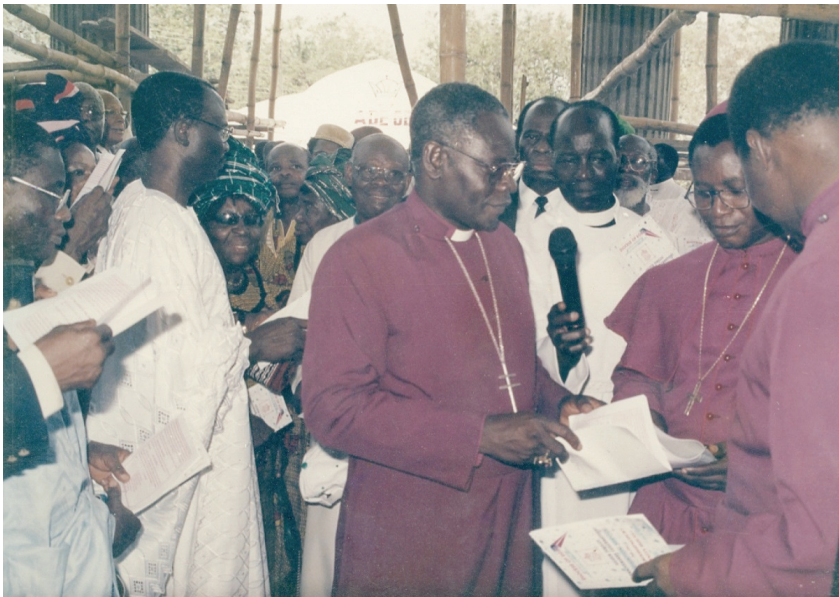
Presenting a plaque to Chief Mrs. G.O. Sodipo



Presenting a plaque of honour to Chief Dr. Ernest Shonekan, GCFR



Warm handshake with Iyalode Chief Alaba Lawson



Primate Peter Akinola being assisted by Bishop C. Oderinde (Methodist), at the dedication of the new bishop's court, 2001



With Primate Ositelu of Church of the Lord



With Chancellor, Chief Akin Delano SAN, and Co. legal luminaries at Synod in April, 2008



THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE
1998



David J. ...

Bishop Matthew Owadayo at 1998 Lambeth Conference



Mrs. Eunice Olufunmilayo Owadayo at Lambeth 1998



With grandchildren, during a post-retirement holiday in London